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Brand drug prices may be halved

Julia Finch

THE price of non-prescription medicines such as painkillers, vitamin pills and nicotine patches is set to tumble after the Office of Fair Trading announced it had started court action to overturn the law that allows drug companies to fix minimum prices for hundreds of popular products.

The move could prompt a supermarket price war and more than halve the price of big brands such as Anadin, Lemsip and Nurofen. Vitamin pills and food supplements such as cod-liver oil and garlic pills could eventually be sold at a fraction of their current prices.

A spokesman for the National Pharmaceutical Association, which represents Britain's 8,000 independent chemists, claimed the action could put 2,000 chemists out of business.

The OFT's action comes

Small chemists say the abolition of price fixing could put 2,000 of them out of business

after a three-year campaign by the supermarket group Asda, which has described the price fixing as "a health tax on every man, woman and child in this country".

Over-the-counter health-care products are the only category of goods still exempt from the Resale Prices Act, which prohibits suppliers from setting minimum retail prices.

The exemption was granted in 1970 when a court decided that without resale price maintenance (RPM) small chemists' shops would be driven out of business.

Yesterday the OFT said it would ask the Restrictive Practices Court to end the exemption as it was no longer in the public interest. The court proceedings are likely to take at least 18 months.

The OFT's director-general, John Bridgeman, said the number of chemists' shops was no longer declining and

the main reason customers now visited them was to obtain prescriptions rather than to buy proprietary brands.

Last month an independent retail research group, Verdict, published a report which concluded that there were too many chemists in Britain and that 2,000 needed to be "culled".

According to Asda, consumers pay £300 million a year more than necessary for branded over-the-counter drugs.

But John D'Arcy, the director of the National Pharmaceutical Association, said the money ensured consumers had access to chemists. "Pharmacists rely on profits from over-the-counter drugs. If RPM ends, pharmacists will be forced to close. We need a diverse and comprehensive pharmacy service." He accused the OFT of "being driven by Asda".

The National Pharmaceutical Association, with chemist chains including Boots and Unichem and drugs manufacturers, has formed an action group to fight any change to price fixing. It claims the culling of 94 per cent of Labour MPs and has said it will take its fight to the courts.

A spokesman for Smith-Kline Beecham, whose over-the-counter brand products include Solpadeine, Panadol, Nicorette and Gavison, said: "We believe RPM protects consumers by supporting chemists".

Asda dismissed the chemists' and drug companies' complaints. "Over-the-counter drugs represent less than 10 per cent of independent chemists' turnover," a spokeswoman said. "They have been scaremongering throughout this campaign". In 1995 Asda unilaterally slashed the price of Anadin and a range of vitamins but was forced to restore them when the manufacturers won court injunctions.

It has since launched its own health-care products which substantially undercut their branded counterparts.

It sells 24 Paracetamol tablets for 24p — compared with £1.09 for 34 Anadin. The store group's own-label garlic tablets are more than 24 pence cheaper than the branded rival.

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School's future in the air



Headmaster Chris Lindup shows how it's done as he gets to grips with the school's problems

PHOTOGRAPH CHRIS ESON

Pupils go from struggling to juggling

Vivek Chaudhary
Education Correspondent

ASCHOOL that finished near the bottom of last year's exam league tables last year and suffers from truancy rates of more than 50 per cent has introduced an innovative subject to try to tackle its problems: juggling.

Pupils and staff at Merrywood secondary school in Bristol are being offered two-day courses in juggling to increase self-confidence and improve their performances.

The courses are run by Chris Lindup, the head-teacher, who decided to introduce juggling after taking part in a business management course.

He claims that after testing a few balls around he felt his own performance had improved. "The juggling is used as an analogy to the other concepts in the course. It helps improve self-confidence, teaches how to cope with mistakes

five or more GCSEs at grades A to C. The figure for 1996 was 3 per cent.

The two-day courses, which involve juggling with a maximum of three balls, have been attended by pupils, teachers, clerks and cleaners at the school.

"The teachers are already witnessing an improvement in the school. The pupils are much calmer and focused in class"

and allows those taking part to see how they can improve by putting in more effort. It also helps them set targets and work towards achieving them," he said.

Last year, 8 per cent of Merrywood's pupils gained

Mr Lindup, who took over at Merrywood last September, introduced juggling at his previous school, which was also suffering from poor results.

He said: "The only thing different we started to do

was get staff and pupils to take part in the juggling lessons. The school went from 6 per cent of pupils gaining GCSE grades A to C to 30 per cent."

"When I suggested the idea, the teachers thought I was crackers and the pupils thought I was off my trolley. But we are already witnessing an improvement in the school. The teachers tell me the pupils are much calmer and focused in class. They are becoming more ambitious and are aiming for higher GCSE grades than before."

John Ashton, chairman of Bristol's education committee, said: "What Chris is doing is brilliant. It is exactly the sort of leadership needed to deliver in a difficult area."

£240,000 sea hunt as hoaxter sits in house at Preston

Sarah Bosseley

ASEARCH by lifeboats, helicopters and a Nimrod jet for a lone sailor on a disabled catamaran was called off after six hours yesterday when police found the mayday calls had come from a mobile phone in Preston.

The caller, who had graphically described his plight on board a yacht battered by storms in the Irish Sea, set in motion the biggest rescue operation mounted from Scotland for three years, costing nearly £240,000 and risking many lives. Emergency services from both sides of the Irish border were also involved.

A spokeswoman for the Coastguard Agency said it was one of the most elaborate hoaxes ever staged. "Normally it is quite easy to spot a hoax call by checking the phone number or asking people about landmarks they can see, but this was a very elaborate and well-planned hoax," she said.

"What this person obviously didn't consider was how many lives he was risking. The weather conditions were very unfavourable and the people who went on the lifeboats and in the helicopters were putting their lives in danger by going out."

"As well as that, so many of our resources were concentrated on one area that if there had been a genuine call from another area, arrival times would have been delayed and yet more lives put at risk."

The man was said to have worked on a lifeboat and to have known the search area very well.

The first mayday call came

before dawn yesterday. At 6.15am, a man made contact with Belfast coastguards on a mobile phone, saying he was in trouble. All the electrical equipment on board his 42-foot catamaran Naomi had failed, he said, knocking out his communications and navigational aids.

Later he reported he was sinking and taking to his liferaft. He said he did not know his location. Six coastguard rescue teams were sent to cliffs overlooking the Irish Sea to try to spot flares.

An RAF Nimrod from Kinloss, a Royal Navy helicopter from HMS Gannet at Prestwick, two helicopters from RAF Aldergrove and lifeboats from Portrush, Co Antrim, and the Scottish island of Islay searched between Islay, the Mull of Kintyre and Rathlin Island off the Co Antrim coast. Sea conditions were reported as dreadful, with a force eight to nine gale.

Later the search was extended up the west coast of Scotland and down the west coast of Ireland. Police first went to the house in Preston to try to contact relatives of the man reported to be on the yacht, but the house appeared to be empty. After further inquiries, they returned and broke in. They found a man with the mobile phone from which the hoax calls had been made. He was taken to Fulwood police station for questioning.

A police spokesman said: "He is very embarrassed, confused and distressed. He seems to have realised the enormity of what has happened."

A 52-year-old Preston man was charged last night with making a malicious phone call, and is due to appear before magistrates today.

How Blair broke his secret leadership pact with Brown

continued from page 1

grandiose his role as a 'secret

Prime Minister". The book claims credit for Mr Brown for a wide range of successful Labour initiatives, from Mr Blair's famed "tough on crime" somnolence to the decision to encourage an anti-corruption candidate in Tait during the general election — though the latter is contested by other Labour insiders.

The book also suggests that the Chancellor and Prime Minister might fall out over European policy, and quotes Mr Brown as saying his ambition in politics is to go "as far as I can and as long as I can".

The two men are described as occasionally conferring in the Downing Street back garden "to avoid their conversations being bugged".

Offering a detailed account of Mr Brown's hitherto veiled love life — including relationships with Princess Margarita of Romania and the broadcaster Sheena Macdonald, among others, as well as with his current girlfriend Sarah Macaulay — the authorised biography directly confronts longstanding rumours that the Chancellor might be gay.

"He is one for the ladies," Mr Piddie concedes, describing how the future chancellor once felt it necessary to explain away the presence of a pair of women's knickers when his mother did his laundry at his Edinburgh flat.

The young Mr Brown is quoted as telling her: "I don't know how they got there. They must have come from the laundry."

Police chief faces disciplinary action

Move follows row over sexual harassment and 'bizarre rituals'

Martin Wainwright

DISCIPLINARY proceedings were launched yesterday against a chief constable criticised in a bitter row over sexual harassment when his police authority decided to ask for an explanation of possible "neglect of duty".

The move against David Burke, head of North Yorkshire police, follows a long-running inquiry into "bizarre rituals" at Harrogate police station and a £500,000 out-of-court settlement to a "devastated" woman constable.

The county's police authority concluded a five-hour meeting with the decision that Mr Burke "may have committed disciplinary offences of neglect of duty". Members of all political parties also fiercely criticised "inadequate, inappropriate

and inflexible" Home Office rules which have dogged the affair with blanket and widely criticised secrecy.

Phil Willis, the local MP, was expelled from the meeting despite offering to swear an oath of secrecy if he was allowed to monitor the debate on behalf of constituents. He described legal rules governing the report, which was typed in a different font and given a different watermark for each of the authority's members to discourage leaking, as "more akin to Stalinist Russia than Britain at the end of the 20th century".

Mr Burke, who retires next week, is to be served with written notice offering him an opportunity to explain his conduct. A spokesman for the authority said last night that retired officers are no longer subject to discipline, but the chief constable is expected to want to clear his name.



David Burke... accused of possible 'neglect of duty'

The secret report by Colin Bailey, Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire, followed a controversial out-of-court settlement to former PC Libby Ashurst 16 months ago. She and a second female officer, Amanda Rose, had detailed a crude and sexist regime at Harrogate, ranging

from incessant remarks to the forcing of officers into a dog kennel and the fitting of bulldog clips to male constables' nipples.

A senior Harrogate officer was later disciplined but the affair rapidly became bogged down in a series of inquiries and appeals, all confidential because of personal allegations and Home Office rules on public interest immunity. The authority, in an agreed statement after yesterday's meeting, called the disciplinary system "inadequate, inappropriate and inflexible" and requested an end to the system of one police force investigating another.

Mr Willis, who beat Norman Lamont to win Harrogate for the Liberal Democrats in May, said: "When an elected Member of Parliament is denied access even on a confidential basis to reports prepared by his local police authority, then the public is justified in asking what is going on. When the reports contain details of alleged misconduct and payments of

hundreds of thousands of pounds and questions the operational ability of the chief constable, then the public has a right to know."

A senior authority's chairman, Angela Harris, has strongly attacked the current system, which has turned North Yorkshire's attempts to resolve the affair into near farce. She left the meeting after reading a brief statement and all members said they had received legal advice not to comment.

Mr Burke, whose "service of great distinction" was acknowledged by Mr Willis, is also understood to be unhappy with the official procedures. He has not been allowed to see the report and will have to prepare his response without seeing it — a situation that sources from the authority itself warned "appears to sit uneasily with natural justice".

Two further reports are pending against senior officers, including Mr Burke's former deputy, John Giffard, who is now Chief Constable of Staffordshire.

Singer pushes verbal expression to its limits

Review

Tim Ashley

Thomas Hampson
Wigmore Hall

"If God forsake the earth, then we ourselves are gods," the unnamed protagonist of Winterreise sings in a moment of existential bravado shortly before the work draws to a close.

For the American baritone Thomas Hampson, the sentence forms the kernel of Schubert's masterpiece. He spits the words out with almost vindictive fury, etching them on to the vocal line so that their import is unmistakable. He has also written a long, intellectually astonishing essay, printed in the programme, explaining their significance as well as commenting on the philosophical and literary allusions buried in the cycle as a whole.

The intellectualism of Hampson's approach affects

his handling of the music. Winterreise may be rooted in Romantic literature and philosophy, but what ultimately makes the work so remarkable is its unflinching probing of the universal emotions of grief and loss. Schubert's hero, ditched by his girlfriend in favour of a wealthier man, flees into a denuded winter landscape to find that his only companion is himself endlessly reflected back in its desolation. It is shattering, naked and uncompromising in its intimacy. Hampson does not quite convey its visceral,

He is a remarkable stylist and a consummate technician. His voice is as beautiful and as burnished as ever. Every phrase is subtly shaded and exquisitely coloured. His tonal range is astonishing and his breath control is well-nigh flawless: he sings the phrases of the opening song, for instance, without splitting them. His handling of the text is similarly formidable: every sentence tells, every word is pregnant with meaning. You are acutely aware at times, however, of a self-conscious attempt on his part to expand

the range of nuance within the range. Sometimes the results are almost excruciating in their directness. Elsewhere, his need to push verbal expression to its limits can detract from the impact.

Vocally, this is one of the most remarkable Winterreises for some time, and Hampson's intelligence as an artist is beyond question. However, his performance does not always emotionally tear you apart, as a great Winterreise should.

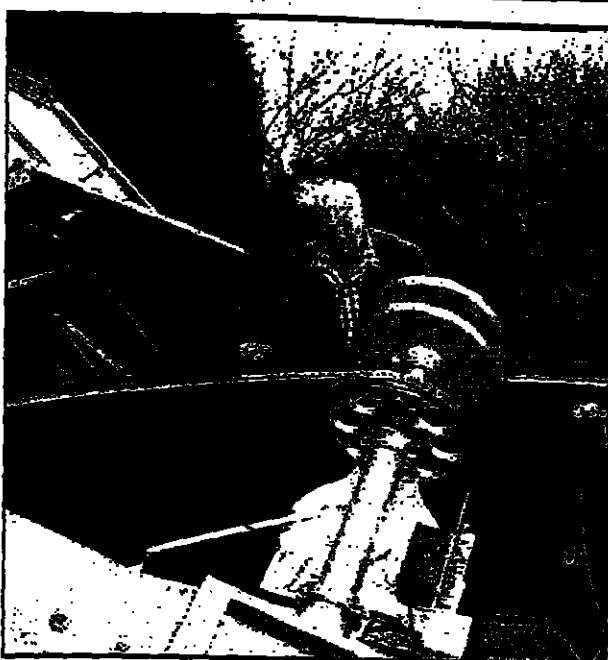
This review appeared in some editions yesterday.

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Tornado chaos in Selsey



Malcolm Wright, left, was sucked out of his bulldozer cab by the 100mph wind, which also damaged the observatories of the astronomer Patrick Moore, top left. Above, a row of garages wrecked by the tornado. PHOTOGRAPHS (LEFT): CHRIS WOOD

'First came the hail, then the wall vanished'

Owen Bowcott

THE Sussex seaside town of Selsey had been battered by harsh weather all week. Teams of bulldozers and lorries from the Environment Agency were busy piling up shingle to repair breaches in the sea wall when the tornado slammed into their vehicles.

Malcolm Wright, aged 51, was sucked out of the cab of his bulldozer as the windows imploded. He survived by clinging to the tracks of his vehicle until the winds subsided.

Another workman, Kevin Stanley, aged 45, was showered with glass after his windscreen shattered. "He had to hang on for his life and narrowly avoided being pulled out to sea," an Environment Agency spokesman said.

The ferocious twister travelled along the beach at Selsey Bill, which juts out into the English Channel, and rammed into two homes overlooking the sea. The rotating wind, believed to have reached speeds of more than 100mph at its core, peeled away the gable end of Jerry and Donna Wearn's two-storey house.

"I was lying in bed when I was woken with what sounded like hailstones, and then the wall had gone," Mr Wearn said. Next door Paul Hood, aged 41, a motor mechanic, hurried under the duvet as the sound reached a crescendo. "It was very violent and sudden," he said. "There was no warning. It was like a thunderclap. The hailstones were almost an inch across and the windows gave way."

Moving inland, the tornado flung slates from one house into the roofs and windows of neighbouring buildings and toppled brick walls. On West Street, the home of the television astronomer Patrick Moore narrowly escaped the worst of the destruction. The domes on his two garden observatories were ripped out.

With his white hair looking slightly more tousled than usual, Mr Moore, aged 67, was philosophical about the damage. "I'm lucky. Had it been a dozen yards this way the whole of my study would have been devastated," he said.

He and a fellow astronomer were in an Indian restaurant in Selsey's high street when the hailstones began to bombard the building. "I've never seen hailstones like that. Selsey normally gets very good weather so this is sheer bad luck. We shot back to my house after the tornado had passed. I was afraid the entire thatch on the roof would have come off."



The twister peeled away the gable end of Jerry and Donna Wearn's house as they lay in bed. PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEAVER



THE recipe for a tornado is simple: a good thunderstorm, cold dry air above and warm moist air below, and winds running counter to each other. That is enough to create a vortex, an upward spiral of wind lifting dust, dead leaves, small buildings and even railway carriages, writes Tim Radford.

In parts of the United States, where conditions are much more dramatic, tornadoes have killed hundreds and torn the surface off roads. In Britain, conditions are ripe for tornadoes only on about 11 days a year: the vortices are smaller and last only minutes, wind speeds are more modest and people may not even notice it.

Even so, a tornado in May 1950 travelled 100 miles, leaving a trail of damage from Great Missenden in Buckinghamshire to Blakeney in Norfolk. In 1971, astonished witnesses saw a local "twister" move a 90-ton railway engine 50 metres along the track.

In September 1986, a tornado hit the town of Selsey in West Sussex. On Monday — hardly reported in the national press — a tornado damaged property on the Isle of Wight. Yesterday morning, another one arrived over Selsey, and in a few terrifying minutes took the lid off the town.

Brian Lee, a wind engineer at Portsmouth university, was yesterday studying a video of the Isle of Wight tornado. "When a twister hits a wooden building in the USA, all you have got left is matchwood. It obviously wasn't the 250mph job, which is utterly destructive. It was the 100mph job that just pushes everything over."

"Why did Hong Kong's ex-Gov do it? Not because he ardently supports a single currency - he's agnostic - but because he felt a line had to be drawn in the sand by the beleaguered Tory left. Thus far, young William, but no further."

Michael White on the political future of Chris Patten

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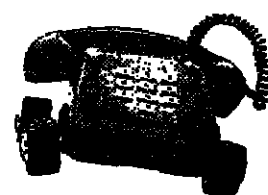
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4 BRITAIN

Blair backs
Dewar bid to be
first 'Scots PM'

Lawrence Donegan

SCOTTISH Secretary Donald Dewar last night confirmed that he is to stand for the Scottish parliament in next year's elections. Mr Dewar, who led the successful Yes campaign in last year's devolution referendum, said he wanted to play his part in a new and exciting phase in Scottish politics, and would eventually bow out of Westminster. However, he will stay in the Cabinet as Scottish Secretary at least until the elections to the new parliament in May 1999.

Minister of his decision yesterday morning when they met to discuss the site for the Scottish parliament. Afterwards, Mr Blair made it clear he would be glad to see Mr Dewar become the *de facto* Scottish prime minister.

"Of course, he will be a loss to us in Government when he goes. But by standing for the Scottish parliament he will be able to exercise his qualities there. I very much welcome his decision and I think it is right for him, for Scotland and for the Labour Party," he said.

Mr Dewar's announcement followed a decision by the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, who told MPs this week that he had no intention of leaving his current post.

He decided against running for the position of first minister when it became clear Mr Dewar was preparing to stand, and that the Scottish Secretary had the support of the Labour leadership in Westminster and the party in Scotland. Mr Cook said last night that Mr Dewar would be an excellent candidate for the position.



Gerald Rae, who claims he was beaten by seven police officers branded as liars by a judge

PHOTOGRAPH BY MURDO MACLEOD

Police 'liars'
in drug case
suspended

Lawrence Donegan

SEVEN police officers who were branded liars by a High Court judge were suspended yesterday after allegedly attacking a man accused of drug dealing with baseball bats and pickaxe handles.

The former Strathclyde drug squad members gave evidence at the 1991 trial of Gerard Rae, who was accused of possessing £70,000 worth of heroin with intent to supply.

Mr Rae, a former heroin addict who had served two jail terms for drug dealing, was cleared of the charges, and launched a civil action against the police. He alleged the officers assaulted him when they raided his flat in 1990 and that they planted the heroin allegedly found there.

During the hearing of his civil action, Glasgow High Court was told that Mr Rae's neighbours twice made calls to the police when they heard the alleged attack.

Mr Rae, 35, could have faced a life sentence if he had been convicted. He is now registered disabled.

At the conclusion of his action, the judge, Lord Marnoch, awarded him £3,000 damages. In a written judgment, he said he was convinced Mr Rae had been attacked with at least one baseball bat, but he was unable to establish how many of the officers had been involved.

"It gives me no pleasure to record that no less than seven police officers, including

three inspectors and one detective sergeant, were prepared to give untruthful evidence from the witness box," Lord Marnoch ruled.

The officers who gave evidence were Inspectors Frank Thom, Ian McEwan and John Pollock, Detective Sergeant Katrina Nicholson, Detective Constable James Dinning, and Constables John Kelly and Andrew Cate. All seven were assigned to different duties after Mr Rae was acquitted.

Lord Marnoch said he could find no evidence to uphold the claim that the drugs found in Mr Rae's flat were planted. The Procurator Fiscal is considering whether criminal charges should be brought against the police officers.

A Strathclyde police spokesman said the officers were called to the force's Glasgow headquarters and suspended by the deputy chief constable, James Richardson.

Mr Rae, who has served eight-year and six-year sentences for drugs offences, owned a sports shop in Glasgow at the time of the alleged attack in 1990.

His estranged wife, Gillian, was also charged with possessing heroin but the charges were dropped.

George Kilday, secretary of the joint board of the Strathclyde Police Federation, said he did not doubt the integrity of the officers, but thought Lord Marnoch's criticisms so outrageous and damaging that it was correct to suspend them until a full inquiry had established the truth.

Tory activists in mood for
more democratic reformMichael White
Political Editor

DISAFFECTED Conservative activists may refuse to settle for the revolutionary package of reforms on offer from party headquarters unless the power to elect future Tory leaders is extended to an election for the party chairmanship as well.

The fear that grassroots anger over the performance of MPs and party HQ in nearby Smith Square may not be appeased by sweeping concessions from Westminster emerged as Sir Archie Hamilton, chairman of the backbench 1922 Committee, wrote to MPs urging them to give activists the final say in leadership contests — but only after a "primary" election confined to MPs alone.

William Hague was last night said by aides to endorse that historic switch which could — in theory — have seen Kenneth Clarke installed as party leader last summer, because most polls indicated the ex-chancellor was more popular among the rank and file.

Mr Hague had originally

wanted to protect himself against the kind of coup which toppled Margaret Thatcher by requiring 60 named MPs to force a no-confidence vote and a 60 per cent vote to force him out. The compromise version — reported in yesterday's Guardian and due to be voted on by MPs next week — would need only 45 MPs (just two of them named) to force the vote and a simple majority to win it.

Some senior MPs and shadow ministers are surprised at the pace of retreat by both the 1922 Committee and the leadership in the face of grassroots assertiveness since Labour's May 1 triumph. "I'm amazed it's gone this far," a shadow cabinet member conceded.

But radical reformers like the Charter Movement and the Conservative Democratic Movement realise that their moment to democratise the party has finally come. Nearly half the constituency party now want party chairmen — currently Lord Parkinson — to be elected, not appointed by the leader. So do some senior Tories, including Alan Clark.

Town hails
return of
pagan sex
symbolRodin's *The Kiss* is heading back to its 'small-minded' roots, reports Dan Glaister

IT WOULD, said an opponent, "infringe the passions of the young soldiery" — and should be withdrawn from public view. Now, more than 90 years later, the young soldiery should be warned: Auguste Rodin's sculpture *The Kiss* is to return to its original home in the East Sussex town of Lewes.

The return of Rodin's sculpture, which has been one of the most popular exhibits at the Tate since it was acquired by the London gallery in 1952 follows a seven-year campaign determined to mark the millennium by restoring what is known locally as the Lewes Kiss to its proper place — and put an end to the lie of small town small-mindedness.

However, after being loaned to Lewes for its mil-

lennium exhibition from June 1999 to January 2000, it will then go to the new Tate Gallery at Bankside.

The sculpture, one of four similar ones by the Frenchman, was commissioned by E P Warren, an American aesthete antiquarian dealer who lived in Lewes with his partner John Marshall, an archaeologist. Warren's attention was drawn to Rodin's sculpture by a friend, William Rothenstein, one of a group of artists gathered around the two men who had seen the original in the Paris salon of 1893. Although it had caused a minor scandal there, he was sure Warren would like its "pagan sexuality".

A deal was struck for the price of £1,000, and the 4½-ton cast high sculpture was commissioned in 1900. Among the special conditions apply-

Homeward bound... *The Kiss* pictured above in 1920 stored in a stable block at Lewes House (top left), and the sculptor Auguste Rodin (centre)

ing to the work, Warren stipulated that the man's genitals should be complete and distinct. In 1903 Rodin, by then the world's most famous living artist, visited Warren's home in Lewes, and the following year the statue was installed in the hallway of Lewes House.

But when Warren loaned the work to the town for public exhibition 10 years later, he ran into the stern opposition of a local schoolteacher,

Miss Fowler Tutt, who reputedly wore a black hat adorned with crows' feathers. After an exchange of letters, the statue was withdrawn from public view and stored in Lewes House.

Unfortunately, the young soldiery was then afforded even closer contact with the offending item. With troops billeted in Lewes House during the first world war, soldiers slept on straw pallets in the stable block where the

statue was stored. Following Warren's death in 1929, the statue went for auction but failed to reach its reserve. In 1933 it went to Cheltenham before being acquired by the Tate in 1952, after a public appeal for £7,500 organised by the gallery's then director, Sir John Rothenstein — son of the man who brokered the original deal between Rodin and Warren.

John May, organiser of the campaign to bring the Lewes

Kiss back to Lewes, where it will be exhibited where it was originally shown, said: "This represents an enlightened decision on the Tate's part. The Kiss has become ingrained in the folklore of the region, and from the 1920s to the 1950s the story of Lewes and *The Kiss* was often used as a symbolic metaphor of small town small-mindedness. Even in the 1950s it was still considered quite controversial."

Prescott orders sky safety inquiry

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

AN IMMEDIATE inquiry into safety in the skies has been demanded by John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, following official reports that air traffic controllers are under growing strain to cope with flights over the UK, which are increasing at 5 per cent a year.

The Guardian learned yesterday that Mr Prescott has asked the Civil Aviation Authority for an explanation after receiving a letter from MPs expressing concern at the growing number of air misses in the London area. The transport select committee has asked for an immediate investigation.

In a letter to Mr Prescott, the committee's chair, Gwyneth Dunwoody, says that evi-

dence suggests that air traffic controllers at West Drayton, Britain's vital hub for policing 5,000 aircraft through UK airspace every 24 hours, are coming under "severe pressure". This was making mistakes and accidents more likely.

Mrs Dunwoody said last night: "We view the situation extremely seriously. The safety of air traffic control at West Drayton should be assessed by the safety regulation authorities as a matter of urgency and their conclusions published."

Mr Prescott's department said last night that he had acted as soon as he had received Mrs Dunwoody's letter, and his findings would be published soon.

Experts have examined 36 near miss incidents between November 1996 and July last year. They found half were

"risk bearing". Two-thirds were due to controller error or omission, and three were the results of errors on the flight deck.

Mr Prescott has asked why flow control measures have been suspended at Gatwick to reduce delays to flights, when such measures have been imposed by air traffic controllers at West Drayton to protect airspace from being overloaded. The decision was taken at Gatwick because flights were increasing, and control is only introduced in bad weather.

The aviation study group based at Lincroft College, Oxford, has warned the Government that West Drayton is being run at capacity without any provisions for an unexpected incident. It says that management tells staff to "get a grip on themselves" whenever there is a problem, and

that staff do not complain because they fear punitive action.

Steve Garner, deputy manager at West Drayton, admits that the controller's job is becoming more pressurised but says that the fear of discipline has gone.

The CAA last night "strongly rejected" Mrs Dunwoody's claim that the West Drayton control centre was unsafe. It had a safety record which stood comparison with the rest of the world and "constant and stringent safety checks" were made by an independent safety regulator.

The CAA is examining the risk of aircraft moving to the wrong level through inattention, misunderstanding or distraction. It has urged airlines to apply procedures that avoid this, and is unhappy that some flight crews ignore instructions.

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How Bradford puts a cinematic slant on promoting itself

Fairy tale comes true for Bradford

Martin Walkwright

BRADFORD has won the premiere of *Fairy Tale*, the new film by Mel Gibson, which was partly made in the Yorkshire city.

Bradford's tourism leaflet reproduces the famous Hollywood billboard to promote its own name.

Stars of the £9 million film, including Harvey Ke-

tel and Peter O'Toole, are expected at the National Museum of Photography, Film and TV for the February 8 premiere. Robert Kant, the city's film officer, said: "The film company wanted a London premiere, but we've persuaded them and the interest suggests we were right."

Bradford has become increasingly popular with US as well as British producers.

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The Guardian Friday January 9 1998

Inside the walls of an unusual jail



Sam McCrory, UDA commander at the Maze. He will be among those meeting the Northern Ireland Secretary today

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN DAVISON

No booze, no sex, but interludes of music

John Mullin listens to the paramilitaries' side of things as journalists tour the Maze prison

MICHAEL Stone, the loyalist whose six murder victims included three in a gun and grenade attack during an IRA funeral at Belfast's Milltown cemetery in 1986, looked more like an ageing sculptor than one of the most notorious terrorists Northern Ireland has spawned. He is 42 now, and his thick hair, beginning to grey, was tied in a long pony-tail. He wore an open-necked white shirt, neatly pressed. He was affable, funny even, with a nice line in self-deprecation. Only his eyes were unusual, wide and staring.

He was speaking in the association room in the A wing of H block 7, now home to 68 UDA/UDA prisoners. He was pointing out that the regime at the Maze was much tougher than newspapers reported. He denied he had ever had intercourse during a visit, as the News of the World had suggested, indicating he was indulging in nothing more than a kiss and a cuddle with his fiancée. "Sex? Wish it had been," he joked.

In a remarkable initiative yesterday, Michael Mogg, governor of the Maze, invited the media along to perhaps the world's most unusual jail. True, there had been a couple of unfortunate incidents recently — he was referring to the escape of an IRA double murderer disguised as a woman and the shooting dead of a loyalist prisoner — but stories that the paramilitaries ran the Maze were off the mark.

He ordered head counts twice a day; mounted searches when he fancied it;

there were no crates of wine on any of the wings; and as for mobile phones, nobody had any need of them because there were card-operated phones on every wing.

Mr Mogg rejected reports that he had been bouncing on the children's castle moments before Liam Averill, 32, who shot dead two Protestants just before the first IRA ceasefire, had made his getaway. He was at a Christmas party for prisoners' families.

"I did not bounce on the castle. Nor did I sing on the karaoke machine. Nor did I dance with anyone's wife. I'm much too old for that," he explained.

After the governor's office, with its portrait of the Queen,

and whiteboard record of how many prisoners staff had been able to count that morning (37), he herded the entourage on its way. It was in 1983 that 38 IRA prisoners managed to escape from a kitchen lorry. There was another at the Maze, a breakout last March. It was foiled only when heavy rain caused the tunnel to collapse. Impossible now, said Mr Mogg, confidently.

Stone was joined by Sam McCrory, 32, officer commanding the UDA prisoners at the Maze, Titch Cunningham, 30, and Robert Philpott, 42. Along with Johnny Adair, they will meet Mo Mowlam, Northern Ireland Secretary,

this morning as she seeks to persuade the 130 UDA/UFF prisoners to stick with the peace process.

McCrory, serving 16 years for conspiracy to murder, said: "There's no booze, no drugs, no sex, and we don't have guns. Our families bought us our portable televisions and music centres. They weren't supplied to us."

"Our cells are unlocked 24 hours a day, but that's only because there is no sanitation in any of the cells. We are long-term prisoners. Coming here is the punishment."

Each wing organises its own orderlies. Paul McCrory, 30, is responsible for cleaning the toilets. On each wing, there is one room containing three showers, three toilets, two urinals and several hand basins.

The IRA prisoners, now in H block 8, formerly home to Averill, spoke in a room containing two computers and a smattering of books, some in Gaelic.

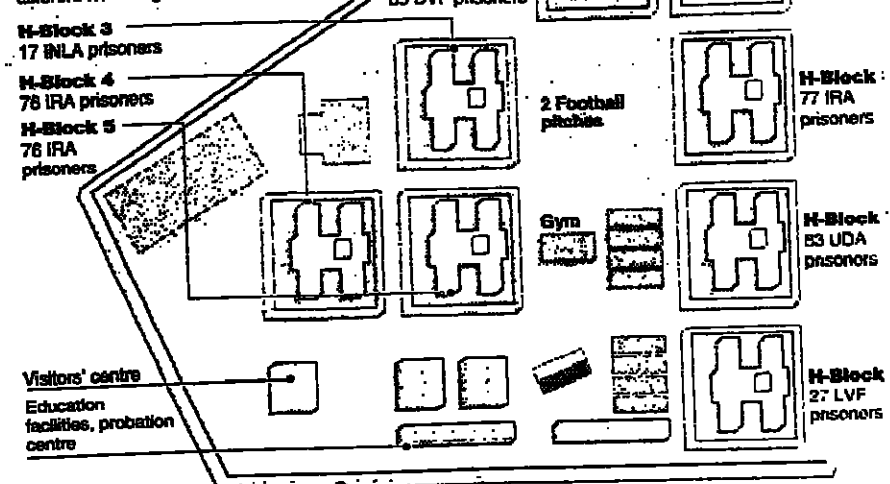
Padraic Wilson, serving 24 years for conspiracy to cause explosions and commit murder, is the IRA's officer commanding at the Maze. It was Wilson who broke the news to prison staff of Averill's escape after he was long gone.

Wilson, 38, was happy enough with the regime. Had prisoners got what Bobby Sands and nine other republican prisoners died for on hunger strike in 1981, a recognition of political status? "Yes, and more," he said. Nobody asks them to do any work; there is free association within the wings; and they can wear what they like.

There was collusion at the Maze yesterday. The IRA and UDA both used the same term to explain why they thought wild stories about the Maze had appeared in the press — "disgruntled prison officers". Funny that, so did Mr Mogg. Prison officers, and there are 1,200 at the Maze, thought it a little strange. But Mr Mogg's aside to photographers was perhaps an insight. "You know," he told them, "I rely very much on the paramilitaries to be able to run this place."

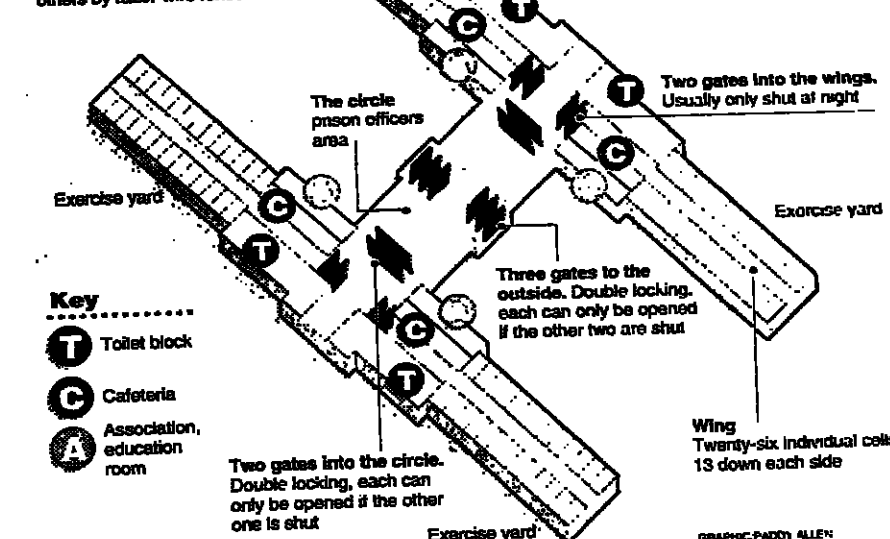
Inside the Maze

The Maze prison currently houses 246 republican prisoners and 254 loyalist prisoners. Of another 37 at the Maze, three are in the prison hospital. Different H-Blocks house prisoners from different terrorist groups.



H-Block

Each H-Block is isolated from the others by razor-wire fences.



GRAPHIC BY ALLEN



Padraic Wilson, the IRA's commanding officer at the jail

'Our cells are unlocked 24 hours a day, but that's only because there is no sanitation in any of the cells. We are long-term prisoners. Coming here is the punishment'

Sam McCrory, UDA prisoners' officer commanding

Women fleeced for youthful skin

Emily Sherfield

WOMEN are spending large amounts every year on anti-wrinkle creams that are a waste of money and can be less effective than normal moisturisers, according to a new report.

Anti-ageing cream is now a multi-million industry and shelves are packed with pots and tubes that promise to "visibly reduce wrinkles" and make skin "firmer, smoother and younger".

To put these claims to the test, the Consumers' Association selected 12 ordinary moisturisers and 12 anti-ageing creams. Each was tested by four women according to the manufacturer's instructions.

None of the 96 women knew which cream they were testing, and at the end of the four-week trial they were asked to guess whether it was a simple moisturiser or an anti-ageing product.

However, the most visible differences proved to be sore or dry skin. Three-quarters of the women thought the anti-wrinkle creams were normal

Names of the jargon game

Arachis hypogaea: Peanut oil
Agua: Water
Ascorbyl palmitate: A relative of vitamin C. There is no evidence it has any effect on the skin in this form.
Ceramides: Fats which give a shine to the skin.
Collagen: A protein in the skin which provides structure. No evidence that collagen applied topically gets through the outer layer of skin, but it may make it smoother.
Glycerin: A fat which is used

in the making of moisturisers
Hyaluronic acid: Attracts water helping to moisturise the skin.
Liposomes: Hollow spheres of fat which are used to carry other ingredients through the outer layer of skin.
Octyl methoxycinnamate: UV filter.
Parabens: Preservatives.
Titanium dioxide: A colouring which may also block UV light.
Tocopheryl acetate: A relative of vitamin E. No evidence it has any effect on the skin.

moisturisers. Ten of the 48 women using anti-ageing creams reported that their skin generally looked and felt better, but 18 out of the 48 using moisturisers said their skin was improved.

The report criticised "jargon" on the packaging of beauty creams and said many were simply water, often described as "aqua", with a combination of fats and sun block.

Anthony King, a skin biologist at St Thomas' hospital, London, said yesterday: "I would be surprised if any of these creams would have any significant biological effect because they would have to be classed as drugs if they did."

He added that all the creams would improve the skin by moisturising but that a cheap cream such as E45 would have the same effect.

The participants were asked to assess the cost of the

product they had been using. Servital by Syence, one of the most expensive at £51 for 30 ml, was guessed by one woman to cost around £5. Others taking part would have been happy to pay the same for Johnson's Baby Moisturising Cream, priced at £2.

A spokesman for Syence yesterday took issue with the report, published in Which? magazine. "Our cream has been tested in the US and here. Effects would be very limited after four weeks."

The most highly-rated moisturiser was Visible Energy Complete Day Cream, by Yves St Laurent. But it was also the most expensive, and the much cheaper Nivea Visage Active Daily Moisturising Cream performed nearly as well.

Newby Hands, health and beauty director at Harper's and Queen magazine, said: "If a cream did have drastic effects in a few weeks, I would be worried. Creams will never replace surgery."

Marion Kelly, director general of the Cosmetics, Toiletry and Perfumery Association, said: "If these products do not perform, they will die."

expolangues

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'We asked Coates and Kerr to do the honourable thing. They clearly have no intention of doing so'

Labour expels rebel MEPs



Stephen Bates in Brussels

LABOUR took the unprecedented step of expelling two of its MEPs last night as the culmination of a row over their criticisms of Tony Blair's leadership.

Ken Coates, MEP for Nottingham, and Hugh Kerr, member for Hertfordshire East and Essex West, were informed by Tom Sawyer, Labour's general secretary, that they had made themselves ineligible to be party members and were no longer entitled to hold office or act as representatives.

Both have criticised welfare reform and centrally-con-

trolled candidates' lists for next year's European elections.

A party spokesman said: "We asked them to do the honourable thing and resign. They clearly have no intention of doing so. We have therefore acted promptly in line with party rules. It was inevitable that their behaviour would lead to this."

The move followed rapidly on their expulsion from the British Labour group at the parliament, and earlier yesterday, from the European Socialist group to which Labour is affiliated.

The men attended a meeting of the group in Brussels to find their names already removed from the attendance

register and from their normal seats. Neither was allowed to speak and both left within a few minutes.

Last night it seemed likely that Mr Coates would join the European United Left group at the parliament, made up of former communists mainly from Greece, France and Spain. Mr Kerr is expected to join the Green Party next week.

In a joint statement, the men, who will remain MEPs, said: "We are appalled at the method of expulsion. We have been denied the right to speak, but they cannot stop us speaking to the millions of Labour voters who are distressed and angry at the Tory policies being pursued by the Blair government."

Their political allies have been predicting a split since before last May's election and Labour's leadership has made no secret of its wish to get rid of them.

• Tory Euro MPs fearful of a purge of single currency proponents by the party leadership yesterday failed to win cast-iron guarantees that they will gain a place on short lists in next year's European elections, writes Lucy Ward.

However, they succeeded in winning assurances that they will not be required to take a "loyalty test" when putting forward their names for selection. Edward McMillan-Scott, leader of the British Tory Euro-mps, met party leader William Hague yesterday.



Hugh Kerr: expected to join the Green Party

News in brief

Mother gave son cannabis

JANE Huckell, who gave her 15-year-old son cannabis to help control his mood swings, walked free from Lewes crown court in East Sussex yesterday after Judge Richard Brown said she needed guidance not punishment. She was given 18 months probation.

Huckell, 41, admitted possessing £130 worth of cannabis and supplying it to her son, Tristan, after she saw how it helped to take "the edge" off his frequent mood changes. She also admitted smoking cannabis regularly and cultivating 13 plants at her home in Hastings. The mother-of-two said Tristan's behaviour made him a "living nightmare" to be with. She feared Tristan would go the same way as his father who also suffered from mood swings and committed suicide 10 years ago. She said the drug had helped to keep her husband in control.

But passing sentence, Judge Brown said despite the difficulties she faced, it was not in her hands to bend the law. He said: "On this occasion, and only on this occasion, I am prepared to consider your welfare rather than your punishment."

Mellor pledge to football fans

DAVID Mellor launched the first stage of the Football Task Force's consultation with supporters yesterday promising that the Government will listen to what the fans have to say.

The Task Force will visit 10 cities between January and May for full days of meetings with fans and supporters' groups to find out what fans want the Government to do about football.

"This is a serious attempt to get major people, from the chairman of Manchester United to the chairman of the Football League, out there talking to the fans," said Mr Mellor, the unpaid head of the task force. "We want to ask the grassroots support what is wrong and what we ought to do about it, especially how we can stop football becoming an industry that loses touch with its bedrock support." — John Durston

No prosecution at Ashworth

MENTAL patients will not face prosecution over allegations that an eight-year-old girl was subjected to sexual abuse at Ashworth Hospital on Merseyside. Judge Peter Falkon QC is conducting an inquiry into claims that a paedophile sex ring operated at the hospital, which holds criminally insane offenders, including Moors murderer Ian Brady. But after a seven-month police investigation it has been decided that none of the patients at the top security hospital will be prosecuted.

Judge Falkon has heard that staff had been criticised for allegedly granting a child sex offender "unsupervised access" to an eight-year-old daughter of a former patient. Allegations about paedophile activity, and a pornographic video racket prompted former Conservative home secretary Stephen Dorrell to order the judicial inquiry.

Champion decorator

WORLD Boxing Organisation heavyweight champion Herbie Hide will complete a community service order doing gardening and decorating alongside other offenders, Pip Coker, probation officer responsible for community service in Norfolk, said yesterday. Hide, 36, who was given a 60-hour community service order by Norwich magistrates last month after admitting using threatening behaviour to two police officers, had hoped to serve his sentence doing fitness work with youngsters.

Hide, from Norwich, said it would make sense to utilise his skills in a similar way. But Ms Coker said: "We don't have any fitness projects."

She added that officers would be wary of setting an unwelcome precedent by making special arrangements for famous people.

London 'film site' listed

BOROUGH Market, one of London's most distinctive film locations, has received Grade II listing. Tony Banks, the heritage minister, said yesterday. The Dickensian area has provided the backdrop to films including 101 Dalmatians and Howard's End. But its cobbled streets and period buildings were under threat from the Thameslink 2000 scheme which includes extending the viaduct. Grade II listing does not rule out demolition, but it means careful consideration will have to be paid to the heritage interest of the area. — Dan Glaister

Paracetamol 'curbs cancer'

PARACETAMOL could help cut the risk of ovarian cancer if taken on a regular basis, Daniel Cramer and colleagues, from Harvard Medical School, say today. They followed 563 women with ovarian cancer compared to 523 healthy women, looking at the use of paracetamol and other pain killers. Women who took paracetamol at least once a week for six months in the year prior to the study appeared to halve the risk of cancer, but the doctors stress in the Lancet that until further research has proved the findings, the pain killer cannot be recommended as a protective step. — Chris Mithill



Tony Blair and Jacques Santer, the European Commission president, at yesterday's opening of Britain's six-month presidency of the European Union

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARPLES

Blair faces balancing act on single currency

Ian Black and Michael White

TONY BLAIR formally opened Britain's six-month presidency of the European Union with a promise to play the "honest broker" in the drive to create a single currency — despite his government's own wait-and-see policy on the euro.

But the Prime Minister coupled upbeat rhetoric with a careful emphasis on co-operation between "free and independent nation states" to achieve what he called "practical benefits" on issues like jobs, crime and the environment which matter to ordinary EU citizens.

"By being constructive and engaged and positive in Europe we can play a leading role on the issues that really matter to people," he said at the end of a day of talks with

Jacques Santer, president of the European Commission, in which he pledged Britain to play a "strong and leading role" — slightly toned down from earlier New Labour talk of "leading Europe".

Mr Santer and his 20 commissioners, who arrived from Brussels by Eurostar, spent the morning at Lancaster House with their British counterparts, establishing the priorities between now and the Cardiff summit in June.

Chairing talks on who is both willing and eligible to join the single currency in May — probably 11 of the 15 EU states — will be the most important test for Mr Blair, who faces a doubly delicate task because of the Government's cautious approach.

The sensitivity of the issue was further underlined last night by William Hague, in a speech in Teignbridge,

Devon, the Tory leader promised to oppose abolition of the pound in the 2001/2 election and warned that if the euro collapses "then Britain will be caught in the economic fallout".

"Some European countries which are not ready for a single currency, but which desperately want to join, will be offended [if excluded]. For a prime minister far more interested in doing what is popular rather than what is right it will mean hard choices," warned Mr Hague.

The Prime Minister is all too aware of the pitfalls, though he sidestepped them yesterday. He also faces an equal challenge in successfully launching negotiations on the expansion of the EU to include five former communist countries and Cyprus.

Mr Blair acknowledged it would require delicate diplomacy to deal with Turkey, angry at not being invited to join and now threatening to annex Northern Cyprus and boycott a grand "Europe Conference" in London in March. He promised action on Algeria, saying: "No one can be indifferent to the scale of the suffering and the appalling crimes there."

As for the problems caused by Kurdish refugees shaking the EU's borderless Schengen Agreement zone, he argued that it highlighted how attractive Europe seemed, at least to outsiders.

"The benefits of the EU are better appreciated by those outside than those inside," Mr Blair observed.

At his side, Mr Santer was in super-complimentary mode, telling Mr Blair: "The new positive approach you are following on European issues is as refreshing as it is appreciated."

European Commission events

Main events during the British presidency

Jan 29	Birmingham: Justice/Police Affairs ministers
Feb 13	Cambridge: Trade ministers discuss transport
Feb 27	Blackburn: Football hooligans, arrests
Mar 2	EU-Russia summit
Mar 15	London: European Conference on the environment, with former Communist countries
Mar 14	Edinburgh: Foreign Ministers
Mar 20	York: Finance ministers
Apr 2	London: EU-Africa summit
Apr 24	Chichester: Transport and infrastructure ministers
May 1	Bristol: EU leaders discuss environment
May 9	Birmingham: European Council
May 10	Nottingham: April 1998 summit
May 14	London: EU-Russia summit
May 18	London: EU-Russia summit
Jun 6	Cardiff: EU summit
Jun 15	Cardiff: EU summit



"Fresh evidence suggests that far from being dead, as the Netheads would have us believe, the book biz is actually hip, cool, or whatever the 1998 equivalent is." Stephen Moss on the new rock "n" roll

Comment, page 13

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www.guardian.co.uk



Je Kan before he left Britain in his attempt to become a Buddhist high priest

Former army NCO wins high priest commission after mountain fast

Rory Carroll on Buddhist's gruelling 100-day trial to reach higher plane of spiritual consciousness

A FORMER British army sergeant yesterday became a Buddhist high priest after losing eight stone during a 100-day fast on a Japanese mountain.

Je Kan, formerly known as Paul Adler-Collins, consumed only rice water, two plums and green tea while sitting in the lotus position for 21 hours a day. Other Buddhists have given up or died during the ordeal which was last completed 36 years ago.

Je Kan, aged 41, from Aldershot, Hampshire, will become the first European leader of his chosen Shingo Mikkyo branch of Buddhism.

Dietary experts attributed his survival to the excess fat he lost. The 30-stone frame carried up Mount Kunimiyama last October, shrivelling to 12 stone by the time the fast ended yesterday.

All his teeth fillings have fallen out and he can eat only baby food until his digestive system recovers. Speaking from the Japanese island of Kyushu, Je Kan said the biggest problem was the rain, sleet and freezing temperatures.

"At one point I could feel hypothermia coming on. I was becoming sluggish and sleepy. It seems to strip away layers and layers of yourself and you find something else underneath. There is a voice telling you that you won't make it — that you're not good enough — but you dig deeper and deeper into your own courage and bloody-mindedness not to give up."

"Some of the experiences can best be described as out of body." Eimei Kawakami, his Japanese teacher, or sensei — the last person to complete the fast in 1962 — took rice water to his mountain shelter and guided his meditation.

Friends will travel to Kyushu to see Je Kan made a head priest in two weeks. Je Kan's wife Helma, aged 48, said she was proud of her husband and looked forward to his return to their Buddhist temple in Carlingford, Somerset.



Je Kan in his spartan hideaway on Mount Kunimiyama during his 100-day fast in Japan

She said she tried to fatten him with fish and chips before he left. "It is a good thing he was so chubby. It is not about power or prestige but about guiding other people."

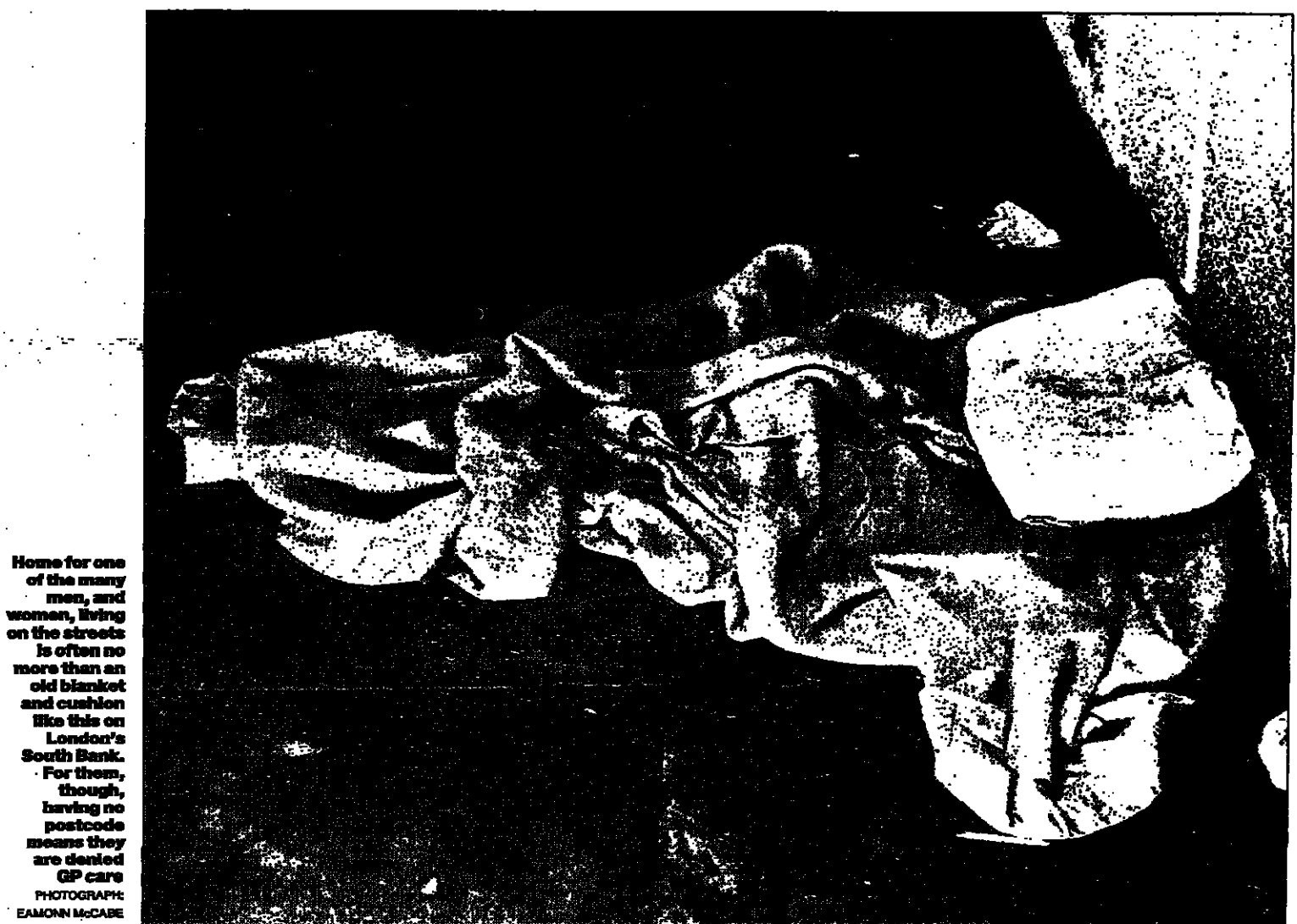
Andrew Prentice, a nutritionist at the Dunn clinical medicine centre at Cambridge, attributed Je Kan's "extraordinary" feat to the energy stored in his body fat. "The rice water can contain a lot of carbohydrates and salts and that can make a difference."

Je Kan's spiritual odyssey began in 1987 after he was invalided out of the Royal Medical Corps. His freight company collapsed when he was defrauded, costing him his first marriage and leaving him homeless and sleeping in his car. He became interested in Buddhism while visiting Japan in 1995.

Arnold Bender, a nutritionist for Weight Watchers, said Je Kan was not a good role model. "We're about good diet and balanced calories. He doesn't fit the bill."

Royal Geographical Society conference

Homeless and hostel dwellers 25 times more likely to suffer premature death



Home for one of the many men, and women, who live on the streets. Is often no more than an old blanket and cushion like this on London's South Bank. PHOTOGRAPH: EAMONN MCCABE

THE HOMELESS and hostel dwellers are up to 25 times more likely than the average citizen to die early, but NHS rules mean they cannot register with a GP because they do not have a postal address, the Government has been told.

Evidence to the Department of Health's as yet unpublished report on how to reduce inequalities in the nation's health shows there had been a vast underestimate of the death rates of men who are homeless, or live in hostels or bedsiters.

In particular, they were most likely to succumb to illnesses like tuberculosis, hepatitis or pneumonia. The government-funded research presented to a Royal Geographical Society conference in Guildford, Surrey, yesterday aimed to explain

anomalies in death rates in men under 65 in various parts of Oxford and Brighton. It found the rates rose dramatically in areas where there were hostels and bedsits.

Danny Doring, from Bristol university, said it had long been known that the homeless were at greater chance of dying, but the scale of the risk had been vastly underestimated. Statistics showed that affluent middle class people with a stable family and fairly relaxed working hours with plenty of holidays lived longer. Those in lower social classes who were unemployed died younger. However, in some places the pattern showed unexpected blips.

Researchers Nic Brimblecombe and Mary Shaw, who set out to find why apparently wealthy suburbs of Oxford and Brighton had high death rates, traced the cause to the homeless, hostel and bedsit dwellers. The same pattern was found in Beth, Reading,

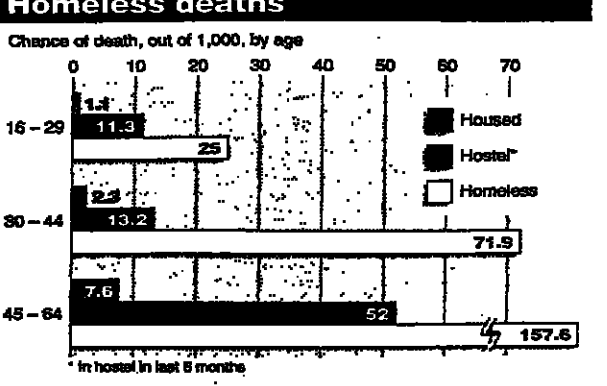
Cheltenham, Gloucester, Worcester and Norwich — all places to which the homeless were drawn because they could get money by begging from the affluent.

In Brighton, the beautiful Regency houses on the sea front had a bedsit land where the death rate among young male residents was very high.

Evidence showed that in the 16- to 29-year-old age group, where in the normal population the death rate was 1 per 1,000, it was 41 among those who lived in hostels or had done so in the previous six months. In the 30- to 44-year-old age group, it was 2.3 for the normal population, 13.2 for hostel dwellers and 71.9 for those who lived in hostels or had done so in the previous six months.

For 45- to 64-year-olds, the comparative figures were 7.6 per 1,000 on average, 82 for hostel dwellers and 157.6 for the homeless. Final figures for bedsit dwellers still had to be worked out, but would be well

Homeless deaths



above the national average.

Dr Doring said: "This was particularly important to get across to the Department of Health because it is exactly the most vulnerable groups who have least access to health care. You have to have a postcode to register with a GP, or they do not get paid."

That means most homeless and hostel dwellers have no access to medical care for complaints that often kill them."

Causes of death include illnesses like cirrhosis, and some suicides and murder, but most are caused by easily treated conditions, Dr Doring said.

Closed circuit TV triggers fear of crime

Paul Brown

BIG brother is watching 24 hours a day in more than 400 British towns as councils bow to demands from the public for closed circuit television (CCTV) systems to keep crime at bay.

The rise in the number of schemes — from 74 three years ago — is partly because towns "without protection" feel they will become targets of criminals if they do not have their own scheme.

There was some evidence from the police that this was the case and so in the last

three years £120 million has been invested in systems by the Home Office and local authorities. Mark Goodwin from the University of Wales told the geographers' conference. Some CCTV systems cost £250,000 a year to run.

The systems were normally put into town centres to protect shops. There was evidence that this type of crime reduced when cameras were installed, but it was less certain how much of it shifted crime elsewhere.

However, along the M4 corridor there was evidence from the police that crime moved

from towns with CCTV to towns without.

This had led to towns as far west as Cardigan with a population of 4,000 getting six cameras and Aberystwyth, with 11,186 people, eight. As a result Newcastle Emlyn, in between, with only 1,500 population, and hardly any crime, felt forced to get its own system.

One surprising result of the research is that the installation of cameras increased fear of crime in side streets where there was no coverage. There was some evidence that this was a legitimate fear as far as attacks on side street shops

was concerned but this was not what people were worried about.

The crimes people most feared, robbery or mugging, were not the offences that CCTV was installed to prevent. However, the result of the fears induced by not having cameras were demands for existing schemes to be extended to residential streets and public areas. Bournemouth, hardly known as a hot-bed of crime, now had 400 cameras because of public demand for protection from muggings which was largely imaginary.

Small towns also tended to

have much larger schemes. For example Kings Lynn, which was a pioneer, started with a few cameras, but now had 77 because of public demand. Newcastle by contrast only had 16.

The cost of running the schemes and keeping towns under constant watch was becoming a problem. Breckland in South Norfolk had just invested £1 million in a system for five towns run from a central control point in Thetford.

Professor Goodwin said research was still continuing to establish exactly how much crime was displaced by CCTV.

Union for servants infuriated king

Richard Norton-Taylor

BUCKINGHAM Palace was outraged when royal servants decided to join a trade union to press for higher wages, according to hitherto secret documents withheld for more than 50 years.

The papers — released at the Public Record Office — reveal that wage rises in royal palaces, castles, and other establishments were lower than those outside during the second world war.

Low paid staff included those with titles such as yeomen of the silver pantry, Coachmen, farriers, and grooms were particularly militant demanding extra money for having to travel from Buckingham Palace to Windsor Castle, and attend the royal family at the Ascot races.

"The staff became disgruntled, began to organise themselves, and finally joined the Civil Service Union", noted a Treasury official in 1946. "Palace wages," he

added, "fell behind during the war."

"It is fairly clear to us," the Treasury told Sir Edward Bridges, the cabinet secretary, "that the present palace rates are low."

But Sir Ulick Alexander, Treasurer to King George VI, was not amused. To allow the union to make representations: "If the king dismissed one of his personal servants would be 'intolerable,'" he said. "There was no reason why the palace officials should have any truck with the Civil Service Union," echoed an unidentified colleague.

However, Sir Alan Lascelles, the king's private secretary, adopted a low profile. "I know very little about the financial and domestic questions involved," he told Whitehall officials.

Most of the 400 or so royal servants at the time earned less than £350 a year. Though some enjoyed benefits in kind, including grace and favour lodgings, they had to work "indefinite" hours, officials noted. In May 1946, the king agreed to increases for

his servants of between 55% and 58% a year.

As the dispute raged, the Treasury reminded the palace that "it was a well recognised practice in this country that employees had a right to represent their grievances to their employer and that if they wished to do so collectively, they could get someone to speak on their behalf."

A deal was struck when Whitehall warned the palace that a refusal to recognise trade union membership would not do the image of the royal family any good.

In return for recognition, the CSU agreed it would keep the deal secret, the Treasury would be the go-between in talks with the palace, and there would be no formal arbitration procedures. If the press got to know about it, then the Treasury and the palace would say that union representation was "quite a normal feature".

Royal household staff are now represented by the Public Services, Tax, and Commerce Union (PTC) which has absorbed the CSU.

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The Guardian INTERNATIONAL

Indonesian meltdown

Regime on the ropes

John Aglionby in Jakarta

PRESSURE mounted on Indonesia's beleaguered President Suharto yesterday as panic buying sparked by the collapse of the financial markets swept many cities and a group of retired generals and politicians added to calls for him to step down.

The cracks in the establishment edifice are the first since the 76-year-old former general came to power 32 years ago. The group of retired generals, politicians and public figures called on President Suharto to step down because of his age and poor health, the Jakarta Post reported.

It also quoted the nationalist National Brotherhood Foundation (NKB) as saying that the People's Consultative Assembly, an electoral body, should not renounce him if, as many expect, he tries to run for a seventh term as president in March.

In another development the Indonesian National Youth Committee, a prominent government group, invited Megawati Sukarnoputri, an opposition leader ousted from the leadership of her own party by the government in 1986, to speak at its forthcoming congress.

A committee member said: "The country is staring down

Chronology

- 1949 Independence under President Sukarno.
- 1965 Major-General Suharto takes command of military and crushes abortive coup.
- 1966 Executive power transferred to Gen Suharto. He bans Communist Party, leading to army-backed purges that kill 500,000.
- 1967 Gen Suharto confirmed as president.
- 1973 President Suharto appointed unopposed for second term. Re-appointed in 1978, 1983, 1988 and 1993.
- 1975 Indonesia invades East Timor.

the barrel of a mighty catastrophe and, as the young generation, we feel we must do our part to rescue the nation. If this means contemplating political reform then we are prepared to do that."

Indonesians have lost confidence in the regime's ability to control the fall in value of the currency, the rupiah, and went on a panic buying spree yesterday. Supermarkets shut four hours early as shoppers rushed to stockpile goods.

"My neighbour told me prices are going to soar in the next week and I cannot take any chances," a shopper said as she loaded about 30 bags into her car.

Meanwhile the rupiah con-

tinued its slide. In afternoon trading it fell below the level of 10,000 to the US dollar for the first time, before recovering slightly.

The decline drove stocks down 18 per cent, with shares in companies owned by the president's relations hardest hit.

"Rumours that Suharto is going to retire before the presidential elections, combined with no adequate government response to the International Monetary Fund's demands for more reform, are driving the markets today," an ING Barings analyst said.

Senior government figures and the military have called on people not to panic, to sell dollars and to trust the government.

President Suharto, meanwhile has maintained a regal silence. "He is stubborn and he is stupid," a palace insider said yesterday. "His desire to die, like a king, in office is his paramount thought right now. The situation would have to get a lot, lot worse before he steps down to save the nation."

But the president's chances of re-election. If he seeks it, are overwhelming, as he is supported by the army and Golkar.

"But there are still two months to the election," a Western diplomat said, "and anything could happen."

Debt default likely, page 15



Suharto announces Indonesia's draft budget for the new year in parliament in Jakarta on Tuesday. It disregarded some IMF demands for reform

Panic buying as calls grow for Suharto to go

Mick Cumming-Bruce in Bangkok

AS FINANCIAL and political storm clouds gather menacingly over Indonesia, the eyes of its 200 million people, and increasingly the world, are turning to a lonely, silver-haired and physically ailing man on whom the outcome of Asia's latest crisis depends.

Fears for the health of Pres-

ident Suharto and the dramatic erosion in investor confidence they have triggered in recent days have brutally exposed the frailties of a regime born in horrific carnage which has no machinery for, or experience of, a peaceful transfer of power.

"He is the system. There isn't a system apart from him and that's why there's a problem. That's why there's a lack of economic confidence," a diplomat in Jakarta said.

President he may be but, since March 1967 when as an obscure major-general he first formally assumed power, Suharto has metamorphosed into the absolute, king-like ruler of the 13,000 islands that stretch over two time zones and make up the world's fourth most populous state.

The cornerstone of his authority may be his iron control of the army which carried him to power but, in the ensuing three decades he has skillfully if ruthlessly gathered into his own hands the strings to manipulate every facet of national life.

He has used brutal military action to deal with any challenge. But, in the process, he offered Indonesians order after a decade of chaos under his predecessor, Sukarno.

In the past 10 years or so Suharto has dispersed power somewhat. He has diluted the military's influence on him by building up his Golkar party's political machine and by courting Indonesia's huge Muslim constituency.

American support has been another powerful prop. The West's fears of communism eclipsed its misgivings about Suharto's regime.

After all, he controlled the sea lanes between the Pacific and Indian oceans, vital to the West's trade and the projection of its military power. And the stability he provided attracted foreign investment

in Indonesia's vast natural resources.

By the award of business monopolies to Chinese-owned conglomerates, Suharto soon became a powerful force in Indonesia's economy. This provided him with the patronage to co-opt critics and buy off enemies.

In the past 20 years members of his family have exploited his authority to acquire huge business interests on a scale which has made them among the world's richest. Suharto has argued that this corrupt family enterprise and his autocratic rule have been necessary to secure rapid economic growth.

World Bank figures show that, for 30 years, the rate at which the average income of Indonesians rose was among the highest in the developing world.

Another favourite official statistic is that only about one in 10 Indonesians now lives below the poverty line against six out of 10 when Suharto came to power.

All of which gives a Shakespearean twist to current events in Indonesia. For the president, isolated and weary at the centre of his web of power, seems unable to act against his children and embrace reform. And this incapacity threatens to end his career in financial ruin and possibly a welter of violence.

As Indonesia's crisis crumples his cronies' corporate empires, soaring prices threaten to turn millions of urban unemployed into mobs.

Until a month ago, shrewd political heads still argued that Suharto was indispensable in this time of crisis. But now wise heads say his lingering on in power is an important cause of Indonesia's problems.

As one think tank analyst now asserts: "It would be just so much better if he goes."

Britain's arms exports may help prop up government

David Fairhall Defence Correspondent

ABRITISH trading relationship running at £1.8 billion a year, including controversial arms exports worth more than £400 million, is at stake in the Indonesian crisis.

If the opposition takes to the streets, British Alvis armoured vehicles and Tatra water cannon could soon be in the thick of it — sold to the Suharto regime last year despite the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook's "ethical" approach to the arms trade.

British banks have an estimated £1.7 billion on loan to Indonesian clients.

British Aerospace and the aero-engine manufacturer Rolls-Royce were monitoring developments

in Jakarta yesterday. Having sold 48 Hawk aircraft to Indonesia, they are now under contract to build another 16, worth perhaps £200 million.

The earlier sales led to protests in this country that such aircraft might be used in Jakarta's military repression of East Timor, but Indonesia denies this.

Indonesia was the first test of Labour's "ethical" foreign policy. Existing arms contracts for aircraft, armoured vehicles and water cannon were allowed to go ahead, but the sale of six armoured Land Rovers and two consignments of sniper rifles — valued at a relatively modest £1 million — were blocked.

Since Labour came to power at least 22 arms export licences for Indonesia have been issued.

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TheGuardian INTERACTIVE

Turkey is bound by plan to stop human traffic

EU police chiefs meet on migrants

John Hooper in Rome

POLICE commanders from Turkey and six member states of the European Union committed themselves last night to join forces in a concerted drive against clandestine migration across the Mediterranean. A statement issued at the end of an emergency meeting here bound the Turks into "common programmes of action" less than a month after their long-standing application for EU membership was put on ice.

Yesterday's meeting was called after more than 1,200 people — many of them Kurds fleeing Turkey and Iraq — landed in southern Italy last week. Germany, which already has a population of around 600,000 Kurds, was particularly alarmed when the Italian president, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, said his country's arms were "wide open" to refugees.

Since last October, Italy has been a full member of the Schengen agreement on free movement within Europe. Germany is among the pact's eight other signatories.

The situation was made more complex by the fact that the ships which brought the refugees had all set off from Turkey soon after its hopes of EU membership were dashed. Whether or not, as Kurdish

representatives have claimed, the Turkish authorities encouraged the exodus, they show no signs of wanting to give up the leverage it affords.

As Turkey's police chief, Necati Bilican, was discussing in Rome how best to combat clandestine migration, a junior government minister in Ankara remarked that the EU would have to put his

Turkey shows no sign of giving up the leverage the exodus affords

country back on the list of applicants "if it wishes to improve relations with Turkey". But opposition has already been raised to Turkey's new involvement. Claudia Roth, spokeswoman for the European Parliament's Green members, accused the Commission's governments of "inviting torturers to the negotiating table".

The Turkish interior minister, Murat Basogluoglu, insisted that his government was "ready to co-operate with everyone". He promised a special investigation into migrant trafficking. It would look at "which ports were used to load the migrants, which territorial waters were

crossed and who was responsible for the ships used in the traffic".

The European countries represented at yesterday's meeting were Italy, Greece, France, Germany, Belgium and Austria. Britain sent a diplomatic observer.

The statement said their talks had taken place in an "atmosphere of practical collaboration and fully shared aims".

There had been an "in-depth exchange of information" and each country's investigations into migrant trafficking had been discussed.

The document committed them to "better control of migratory flows at the frontiers and more incisive investigative activity". It pledged inquiries into the assets of suspected traffickers.

The Italian interior minister, Giorgio Napolitano, told parliament yesterday that 2,646 Kurds had entered the country since last July. But, of these, he said, only 366 had asked for asylum.

Indecision of the issue is not Italy's policy towards political refugees, which is quite strict, but the fact that it does not have a law allowing deportation of those not seeking asylum.

A bill put before parliament by the centre-left government aims at tightening the law on clandestine immigration, but it has yet to be approved by both houses.



Spanish police arrest Heide Fittkau-Garthe, a German psychologist and alleged leader of a doomsday cult, in Santa Cruz de Tenerife. They foiled suicide plans by her sect, believed to be an offshoot of the Order of the Temple of the Sun, which staged a mass suicide in Switzerland in 1994 (below)

Spanish police arrest leader of doomsday cult and thwart mass suicide plan

AP in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Islands

Spanish police arrested a German psychologist hours before she allegedly planned to lead followers of her religious cult in a mass suicide.

Heide Fittkau-Garthe, aged 57, was arrested on Wednesday on charges of attempting to induce suicide and was being held at a Tenerife police station, said Antonio Lopez Ojeda, an interior ministry official in the Canary Islands.

The authorities said 30 members of the cult planned to kill themselves before 8pm yesterday, when they believed the world would end. They told the police that a spaceship would collect their bodies from Teide mountain on Tenerife.

Mr Lopez Ojeda said the police believed the sect was an offshoot of the Order of the Solar Temple, whose followers have carried out mass suicides in Canada, France and Switzerland, but they were still investigating.

The followers, 29 Germans

and a Spaniard, included five children aged between 6 and 12, he said. They were questioned after a search on Wednesday of a house in central Santa Cruz de Tenerife where Ms Fittkau-Garthe was staying, but none was taken into custody.

Ms Fittkau-Garthe could be jailed for four to eight years. In 1994, 48 members of the Order of the Solar Temple killed themselves in Switzerland. Five more died that year in Canada. Sixteen died in the French Alps in 1995, and five more in Canada last March.



Station is given new direction

Paul Webster in Paris

THE Gare du Nord, where lost and confused Britons queue at the information centre to ask the way out, is to undergo a £25 million face-lift to end the station's reputation as Europe's worst public transport maze.

Used by half a million passengers a day, the 134-year-old edifice in the 18th arrondissement has become architecturally lopsided, with the smart London-Paris Eurostar terminal contrasting with the run-down suburban and underground section, where the 1,500 staff spend much of the day helping lost foreigners.

"When a traveller arrives in the Gare du Nord, he's like he's caught in a pinball machine," Pascal Loupo, Paris-Nord manager for the SNCF state railways, said.

"They have great difficulty in getting out of the place or finding a transit link. It's a real obstacle course. You know you're going to get there eventually, but it will never be by a direct route. Frankly, the whole place is pretty old-fashioned and needs tidying up."

The worst nightmare for Britons is trying to get from the RER express Metro to the Eurostar terminal. A permanent watch

is kept for heavily-loaded passengers turning round and round with bemused expressions as they try to make sense of the directions from the underground or find the platform for the Charles de Gaulle airport express.

The renovation plan, which is expected to be completed by the end of the century, will co-ordinate the three Metro lines, the two RER services, and the six bus links that are spread inside and outside the station built in 1864 to impress Queen Victoria during a state visit. Priority will be given to building a bus station in time for football's World Cup in June.

The grandiose facade, with its nine monumental statues representing northern cities, will not be changed, but a huge adjoining multi-storey car park will be demolished to make way for a glass concourse that will resemble the Eurostar terminal at Victoria.

A rush decision to carry out the work is linked to the explosion in cross-Channel and suburban traffic that has made the Gare du Nord the world's third busiest railway terminal, after Tokyo and Chicago.

The Channel Tunnel and a new super-speed link with Brussels have added to rising suburban and Metro traffic. About 1400 trains use the station a day.

Red Cross offers soup kitchen and safety net

Owen Bennett Jones in Geneva

THE International Red Cross is changing its focus from dealing with mass population movements and the needs of refugees to the consequences of natural disasters and economic and social dislocation.

Red Cross officials say they are reverting to the activities they carried out after the first world war: "We're helping through the winter, distributing warm clothes and running soup kitchens — notably in the European countries," said the undersecretary-general, Margareta Wahlstrom.

The Red Cross says that in the past 10 years at least 20 per cent of its budget has been devoted to the consequences of mass population movements. But with the crises in former Yugoslavia and the Great Lakes region of Africa beginning to stabilise, the need for such relief is declining.

Officials believe that the recent turmoil in financial markets will increase the organisation's workload in Asia.

"We are already providing relief to more and more people in Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia," its spokeswoman Charles Evans said. "But the current economic situation is likely to mean that more and more people in Asia will fall through the social safety net."

EU lawsuits leave Britain unscathed

The 'reluctant' European is one of the most amenable, Martin Walker writes in Brussels

A BLIZZARD of lawsuits and formal complaints filed this week by the European Commission against most member states, against the backdrop of standards to French discrimination against foreign modelling agencies, left a law-abiding Britain untouched.

Britain's immunity happily coincided with the launch of the EU's full Commission holding meetings with the Government in London yesterday.

France led the unusually long list of offenders, with four separate complaints to Brussels in the last 24 hours. The Commission uses a long and complex procedure

against members thought to be breaching EU rules, designed to reach a settlement before the ultimate step of taking the case to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

Despite Britain's reputation as the reluctant European, it emerges from the latest European Court of Justice statistics as one of the most law-abiding members, the subject of only one of the 93 legal actions brought by the Commission against members in 1996.

There were 20 actions against Belgium, 17 against Greece, 11 against France, and nine each against Italy, Germany and Spain. There were no lawsuits filed against Austria, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland.

The complaints against France relate to failure to report its monitoring of ozone levels in black smoke, German plastic waste shipments, food processing rules which discriminate against exports from other EU countries, and its requirement for new modelling agencies to deposit more

than £10,000 with the French authorities "an infringement of the provision for freedom of trade in services".

The Commission dropped another case against France this week for failing to classify the Loire estuary as a special nature protection area, after it agreed to extend

This week it decided to call in Air France's proposed alliance with Delta and Continental airlines, to make sure they followed competition rules.

It brought a legal case against Italy's idiosyncratic weights and measures system, and warned Greece to

water treatment, and against Belgium for being 12 years late in observing quality standards in bathing waters.

Spain, Portugal and Greece were also hit for failing to open their public procurement contracts to EU competition. Greece could face fines after failing to comply with a 1996 ruling on the matter by the Court of Justice.

And Volkswagen faces fines for refusing to sell its cars through Italian dealers, whose prices are lower, to German and Austrian nationals.

The flood of lawsuits on competition and procurement should ebb soon since most of them stem from 100-plus directives issued in 1990 and 1991, a number which fell to just 15 last year. But environmental lawsuits look likely to replace them.

France leads the unusually long list of offenders, with four separate complaints

the boundaries to include bird sanctuaries.

Although the EU remains some way from fulfilling that notorious forecast of the former Commission president Jacques Delors that 80 per cent of legislation would soon come from Brussels, the range of the Commission's authority is now vast.

change its laws on the sale of pesticides to prevent discrimination against other EU exporters.

The burst of legal activity included actions against Italy and the Netherlands for failing to file plans to deal with agricultural nitrates in ground water, against Spain and Portugal for failings in waste-

Leader comment, page 12

Germany to restore era of police bugging

Reichers in Bonn

THE German government said yesterday that police would once again be allowed to bug the homes of suspected criminals, a practice banned since the Nazi era.

Leaders of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's centre-right coalition and the opposition Social Democrats are in agreement, and both houses of parliament are expected to pass the long-debated measure quickly.

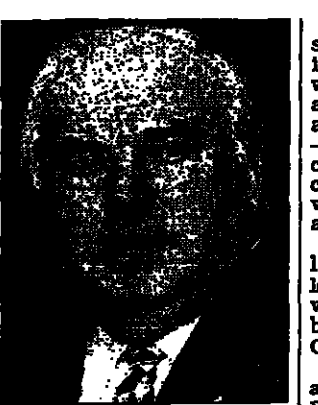
Germany, which reacted to West German abuses with some of the Western world's most extensive civil liberties laws, has long resisted any relaxation in the constitutional rules that have kept police out of private homes.

The agreement has been criticised by police unions because of some limits that water down the measure, and by leftwing parties who say it undermines the constitution's guarantee of privacy in a person's own home.

The police will be required to obtain advance court permission for any surveillance.

Election past master might accept defeat at polls but not in euro battle

In the final part of his series on the issues facing German voters in an election year, Ian Traynor looks at the obsession of Helmut Kohl (right) — a greater Europe



CHANCELLOR Helmut Kohl never tires of stressing that German and European unification are two sides of the same coin.

But seldom have the two issues of German politics and European integration been so inextricably bound up as this year. In May Mr Kohl will seek to secure the key decision that makes the single European currency "irreversible", four months later to win an election to make him Germany's millennial leader.

Confronted by constitutional challenges, rising Euro-scepticism, and a public persistently opposed to the single currency, Mr Kohl has opted to grasp the nettle and turn the euro into a central campaign topic.

He is very good at elections. And he will bring his formidable electioneering talents to

bear to get his way on the euro. He will almost certainly win — on the euro, if not necessarily in the election.

The German public does not like the euro. But it will lump it. While opinion polls return a verdict of hostility towards the single currency, they also indicate a resigned expectation that the euro will supplant the mark in a year.

If given the choice of enjoying only one victory, the chancellor might even prefer to win the euro battle and lose the election, secure in the knowledge he would be bowing out as the single currency is launched, bringing his dream of Europe's political union closer to reality.

He is confident he will get his way in May when it is decided who is fit for the single currency and their exchange rates are locked.

On October 20 last year he spent five hours at Chequers in "private" conversation with Tony Blair and came away satisfied that he had achieved his paramount aim — the single currency, chairing the crucial single currency meetings in May, would steer things in an agreeable direction.

The pay-off for Mr Kohl followed when the German leader offered to keep a seat warm for the British on the board of the new European Central Bank.

But Mr Kohl's ambitions aside, German attitudes to Europe and Brussels are becoming more ambivalent, more strident and more sceptical.

The foreign minister, Klaus Kinkel, also a Europeanist, has recently taken to berating the fact that across the European Union the "readiness for integration" is on the decline.

German officials are scathing about the European Commission's Agenda 2000 for the union's future. Barely a week goes by without more grumbles about Germany being the EU's paymaster.

Italian immigration policy is too lax. Irish corporation tax is too low. Dutch drugs policy is too liberal. And so on.

Mr Kohl's main rival for the chancellorship, Gerhard Schröder of the Social Democrats, is against the EU's expansion to eastern Europe.

In his keynote speech to his

party congress in November, the Bavarian prime minister, Edmund Stoiber, had barely a good word to say about the EU. He rebelled against Brussels dictating whether and how Bavaria could spend regional subsidies and structural funds.

In Saxony, the Christian Democratic prime minister, Kurt Biedenkopf, also threw down the gauntlet to Brussels, insisting on paying out subsidies to Volkswagen to promote jobs creation.

The vague notion of "Europe" remains popular among Germans and supplies an ersatz patriotism — off the sports field — in a country which, for historical reasons, proscribes nationalism. But Europe is a lot less favoured in the east than the west.

The transfer of the entire governing elite and the centre of political gravity next year from the Rhineland to Berlin, 400 miles to the east, will inevitably bring a psychological shift away from the Franco-German axis that has been the EU bedrock for 40 years. The arrival in power of a younger generation unscarred by the war years will reinforce that process.

It may just be that Mr Kohl will meekly let the waters of Euro-scepticism wash over him, taking one step back in the single currency, to take two large strides forward in his unremitting drive for European integration.

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Beijing jailed Wei Jingsheng to silence him — now he speaks to the West, writes **John Gittings**

leader, the Dalai Lama: China will protest even more loudly if that happens.

Mr Wei's interest in Tibet dates from a relationship before his first arrest in 1979, with a Tibetan, the daughter of a communist who was imprisoned much earlier. Unusually for Chinese dissidents, Mr Wei has urged Beijing to negotiate with the Dalai Lama and has denounced racial prejudice against Tibetans.

In London, Mr Wei will meet the Chinese minister Derek Fatchett and Baroness Thatcher. The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, has agreed to see him on a later visit.

Yesterday he expressed concern about the intensifying dialogue which might take Mr Wei and Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, to Beijing this year. "Dialogue is not a bad thing," he said. "But when

the democratic situation in China is getting worse, not better, it can be seen as an encouragement."

Mr Wei belongs to the generation of former Red Guards who began as fervent Maoists in the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, but became disillusioned by the end of the 1970s.

'Dialogue is not but democracy in China it can be seen as a

signed by seeing workers and peasants suffering.

At the age of 16, while travelling as a Red Guard, he met a beggar so poor that she had covered her body with mud because she had no clothes.

In the short-lived period of the Democracy Wall, in 1978-

79. Mr. Wei championed the cause of peasants who had come to Beijing to complain of mistreatment. He was sentenced to 15 years in jail in 1979, having offered the paramount leader Deng Xiaoping by suggesting that he might behave like a dictator.

**And, but when
China is getting worse
'encouragement'**

He was also accused of betraying military secrets after an incoherent conversation with a foreign journalist about China's war against Vietnam.

He enjoyed six months of liberty in 1983-84 when China, bidding for the 2000 Olympics,

Mr Wei claims that prisoners were given favours, including conjugal visits, as a reward for their silence. China has denied all such charges, but Amnesty International, concerned about his treatment, adopted him as a prisoner of conscience.

Mr Wei says he intends to write a book about the abuse of political prisoners in China.

Some of Mr Wei's statements since leaving China have drawn criticism from the faction-ridden Chinese "democracy movement", but the impression he conveys is that of a man shattered by many years of suffering and struggling to come to terms with the world outside.

At the age of 16, while travelling as a Red Guard, he met a beggar so poor that she had covered her body with mud because she had no clothes. In the shortlived period of the Democracy Wall, in 1978-

He was also accused of betraying military secrets after an incautious conversation with a foreign journalist about China's war against Vietnam.

David Fairhall
Defence Correspondent

TWO former British foreign secretaries, Lords Carrington and Owen, found themselves on opposite sides of an argument yesterday about giving the United Nations its own armed forces.

Lord Owen, speaking for the prestigious Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, argued that half a million lives might have been saved in Rwanda if the UN had been able to send

a small force instantly, to smother the ethnic conflict in April 1994. Even the Bosnian war might have been preempted by a UN rapid reaction force, he suggested in a BBC Radio 4 interview.

Lord Carrington presented the conclusions of an equally weighty international task force report on UN reform. It argues that, for the time being at least, a UN standing army is a political and military impossibility. It would need the support of a major power like the United States — whose administration is

distillation with the UN — to transport it to the scene of a crisis, support it there and rescue it if it ran into trouble.

The task force chaired by the Tory Lord Carrington, who like his Labour/SDP counterpart has bitter experience of peacekeeping failures in Bosnia, was asked by the UN Association of the United States to consider ways of strengthening the UN's ability to enforce its will.

Its main conclusion is that the Security Council badly needs "world-class" professional advice on how to manage


military interventions and economic sanctions. In each case, the longer-term consequences for people in both the country acted against and its neighbours should be better thought through.

The task force suggests reconstituting the UN's military staff committee, in place since 1945 but never given a serious brief. And it supports enlarging the Security Council's permanent membership.

The Carnegie Commission, which Lord Owen co-chaired with a former US secretary of state, Cyrus Vance, also fo-



Carrington (left) argues a UN armistice is the only way to end the war while Owen (right) says it could be a disaster



my is a political impossibility, have pre-empted Bosnian war

HONG KONG has scrapped the right to "port of first asylum" which Vietnamese boatpeople have enjoyed for 19 years. It means that those arriving illegally will no longer be given time to apply for asylum.

Most people in Hong Kong approve of the change, saying that the policy adopted in 1978 is out of date and that nearly all Vietnamese migrants are seeking jobs, not asylum. But there is concern at the speed with which the new legislation will be adopted and then imposed retrospectively. — *John Gittings.*

THE man convicted of masterminding the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York and an aeroplane bombing in 1994 resumed defence as he was sentenced yesterday to life without parole. "Yes, I am a terrorist and am proud of it," Ramzi Yousef told the court.

Judge Kevin Duffy sentenced Yousef in New York following his conviction for the attacks in separate trials. Judge Duffy said he would recommend that Yousef remain in solitary confinement for life and be visited only by his lawyers.

Nothing was said about whether Yousef was rich enough to buy your car. He also fined Yousef \$4.5 million (\$2.7 million) and ordered him to pay \$250 million restitution so that any money he might make would go to his victims. — AP, New York.

A DANISH feminist group yesterday retracted a claim of responsibility for the decapitation of the Little Mermaid statue on the Copenhagen waterfront earlier this week.

A member of Denmark's Radical Feminist Fraction (RFF) said that the claim, faxed to police on Wednesday, had merely been intended to attract attention to the feminist cause.

The false claim of responsibility had been meant as a "happen-ing," she said. — *Reuters, Copenhagen.*

THE French prime minister, Lionel Jospin, yesterday promised that measures to improve unemployment benefits would be announced today.

Mr Jospin and the employment minister, Martine Aubry, met representatives of trade unions and employers to discuss strategies following the national protest yesterday linked to sit-ins at about 30 welfare fund management centres. The protesters, some of whom have been occupying government buildings for three weeks, have asked for an immediate new year bonus of about 5300. — *Paul Webster, Paris.*

THE European Union decided yesterday to send a fact-finding mission to Algeria to investigate around 1,000 people have been massacred in the last 10 days.

The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, announced that the delegation would comprise diplomats from Britain, which took over the EU presidency this month, the previous president, Luxembourg, and Austria, which will take over on July 1.

British officials asked privately that options are limited since the UN Security Council has not yet issued calls for any international investigation of killings largely attributed to Islamist militants. — *Jan Black, Diplomatic Editor.*

A CZECH helicopter crashed on take-off yesterday in north-west Bosnia, hurting 21 people, nine of them seriously.

There were three crew and 18 peace force soldiers on board the chopper, which crashed near Bosanska Krupa in north-west Bosnia.

Meanwhile, another member of the Nato-led peace force, a French captain, was killed in a car crash on the road from Pale to Sarajevo. — *AP, Sarajevo*

THIS trial of Theodore Kaczynski, the man accused of being the so-called Unabomber, was delayed again yesterday when he asked the judge in Sacramento, California, if he could conduct his own defense.

On Monday the jury was sent home after the former maths professor asked to make a statement about his condition in which he is resisting attempts to portray him as mentally ill. On Wednesday the judge thought he had resolved the difficulties after Mr Kaczynski appeared to accept his ruling that it was too late to change counsel. — *Christopher Reed, Los Angeles*

SOMEONE with deep pockets and a taste for ancient Greece walked out of the Louvre in Paris with a foot-long stone fragment from around 400BC, museum officials said yesterday.

The stolen piece, originally found near Athens, is a fragment of a wish list dedicated to Zeus, asking the god to protect the country from all kinds of illnesses. — *AP, Paris*

A MAN employed by the Danish royal palace to handle household purchases for Prince Joachim has been charged with misusing the prince's credit card to buy goods and services for himself, reports said yesterday. The man denies using the card of Queen Margrethe's youngest son to refurbish his own quarters and to buy clothes, shoes and wines for himself. — *AP, Denmark*

FORGET the virtual pet on a keyring, make way for the virtual lover. The electronic toy, called My Lover, went on show at the Hong Kong toys and games fair this week.

The new gadget requires owners to court virtual partners with flowers and chocolates, karaoke dates and love letters to win affection and affinity points.

Players can win a virtual kiss and marriage if they score enough points. But if they slack in their affections, their partner may snub them in favour of a third party. — *Readers, Hong Kong*

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Analysis Space technology



The king over the water
13

A little help from next door

Space research has enriched our lives for 40 years. So what's around the corner? By **Tim Radford** and **David Rowan**

WITHIN a month, a space probe not much bigger than a dustbin will be making new maps of the Moon. Lunar Prospector, launched this week, is the US space agency Nasa's first new look at the Earth's nearest neighbour for 25 years. Its on-board instruments will be asking the Moon some very simple questions: how did you come to be, and why, and what do you have in your surface strata?

Do not be fazed by answers about rock densities and petrological makeup. If the answer includes water, a future dreamed of only in Dan Dare comics could at last be about to happen.

There are plans to quarry to Moon for minerals. With those minerals, engineers could start to build an industrial base on the Moon, and then a space station in low orbit around the planet. The engineers at lunar base could extract oxygen from the Moon rocks to sustain their own lives and then to make rocket fuel. Asteroids could also be captured and mined up for their contents: hydrogen for the other rocket-fuel component, for a start. Then the engineers would build a solar-power collector. At first it would be for their own use, but they would soon be able to beam the spare energy back to Earth. With cheap power and raw materials and easy access to space — easy simply because gravity on the Moon is so low — the lunar entrepreneurs would be able to get on with building cities in space: huge structures that could be homes to 10,000 people, slowly rotating to provide artificial gravity.

Of course, if Lunar Prospector fails to find water on the Moon, then the dreams will turn to dust again, at least for a while. But the journey will have been important all the same. Space is the adventure of this century, and the next. In 1945, Arthur C Clarke wrote to Wireless World with a proposal for communications

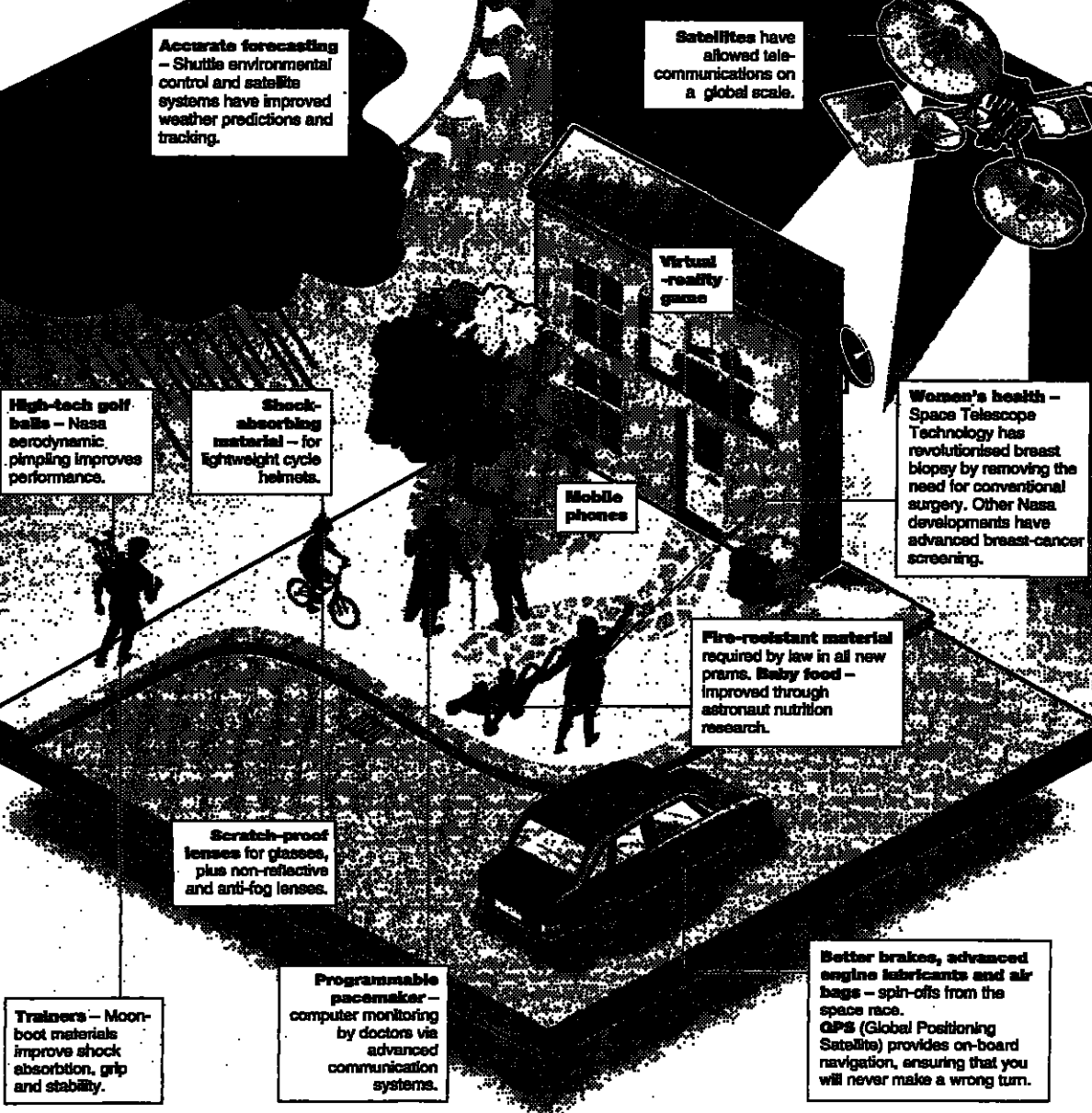
satellites in geostationary orbit, and it must have seemed like a fairy tale. In 1967 the Russians launched Sputnik 1, and it looked like little more than an insolent gesture in the cold-war arms race. But since then, access to space has changed the world.

Airline pilots need no longer learn to navigate: they can tell exactly where they are because of satellites that circle above. Solitary polar explorers and yachtsmen now routinely check their position with the help of one satellite network, receive weather forecasts thanks to a second, and then phone home for reassurance using a third. The entire military might of two super-powers was built on space technology, and a huge industrial communications super-structure has grown up around the same bits of metal orbiting the planet every 90 minutes or so.

But even so-called "research" satellites have become powerful agents of change. There are satellites that monitor wave heights in the Southern Ocean, and feed the data back into a new model of world weather. There are orbiting instruments measuring soil moisture and predicting famines that might be about to happen. There are high-flying monitors on the track of transient happenings like El Niño, or the hole in the ozone layer; there are ground-penetrating radar instruments in high orbit, detecting evidence of underground rivers in arid regions, or the traces of long-buried human settlements for the archaeologists. Space has made a world of a difference: it has, quite literally, helped people more clearly to see the world for what it is.

But space has also become a laboratory: it has begun to help humans see themselves for what they are. Huge numbers of experiments over the last decades have taken advantage of microgravity: only by examining plant growth, or human physiology, or crystal structures in space can engineers and technologists begin to get an understanding of

...without which none of this would be possible



how warped we are by the steady tug of the Earth's mass. Astronauts in orbit for a week begin to grow taller; their bones begin to leak calcium, their muscles begin to waste a little. Discoveries like these are beginning to answer questions about human nutritional needs, and about chronic back conditions.

Astronomers — now devising instruments to collect light that has been on its way to Earth since shortly after the birth of the universe 13 billion years ago — have developed detectors that could help spot cancer cells as they form. They have instruments which can measure a millionth of a degree: the equivalent of resolving a virus on the Moon.

But the most dramatic advances have been in engineering. It costs a lot of energy to fire a small packet of payload into space. So from the start there has been pressure to find new solutions to a new problem. Spacecraft needs have kept computer scientists on their toes, and the sheer stress of accelerating hardware to five miles a second has kept materials scientists working their fingers to the bone. The payoff has been in robotics, in data handling, in sensor technologies.

The headlong rush for the high frontier has led down some unexpected avenues. One team of Nasa scientists is experimenting with a silicon gel 1,000 times less dense than glass. They have dubbed the stuff "frozen smoke": a lump the size of a human could bear the weight of a car — and weigh only 1lb. Another team is about to put a little laboratory of granules on to a space shuttle later this month: it will help answer questions about what happens to soil behaviour in earthquake zones, to vacuum-packed coffee, to cosmetic blusher powders.

SOW will space technology continue to touch our daily lives in the next couple of decades? Richard Taylor, chairman of the British Interplanetary Society's Scientific Programme Committee, and a noted lecturer on the subject, offers a singular prediction: colonisation. "We are likely to start to see it on a small scale by the end of the first quarter of the 21st century," he says. "There will be numerous and quite sizeable exploration bases on the Moon, and later on Mars. Most of the technology to do this already exists." Then perhaps in 200 years, he suggests, Mars could support an environment capable of providing a home for billions of people.

More immediately, Taylor forecasts solar power stations in space — "on the Moon, to provide energy for building factories or shuttles" — and the mining of asteroids, for materials such as nickel, iridium and platinum that are in short supply on Earth. In order to avoid a crash in precious-metals prices, he believes a "space De Beers" would be needed to control market access. He also believes Global Positioning Satellites will be used to develop "automatic-drive self-navigating cars that would create accident-free driving". Drivers would simply dial a code to plot their destination.

Nick Flowers, who works at UCL's Mullard Space Laboratory on the Cluster project to study the magnetosphere, is equally confident that space research will soon serve to

meet more human energy needs. As well as orbiting solar power stations — beaming energy to Earth with microwave technology — Flowers foresees a cleaner alternative to current nuclear-fission technology. "Helium-3, an isotope of helium — something only known to exist on the Moon — could be used to generate energy through fusion technology rather than the fission now used in nuclear reactors. Fusion generates little radiation in comparison, and no byproducts that take thousands of years to decay."

The Moon is also packed with metal oxides that could be mined for use on Earth. "Take the oxygen off, and you've got a lump of metal for industry to use — all without digging up rainforests to get to it. Though it might be 100 years before we start mining,"

Industry would also be taking to space, to benefit from processes that depend on zero gravity. "In space, heating something does not lead to convection — which causes havoc in some industrial processes. So it would now be much easier and cheaper to grow, say, extremely pure silicon wafers for electronics applications. This is already happening on Mir."

There will also be medical applications, Flowers says. "Last year on Mir, an insight was given into osteoporosis, the loss of bone calcium. No one is quite sure how it happens. Under zero gravity, a German wore an insert on his foot that tapped the foot periodically. Afterwards it was found that this foot had kept its bone structure, yet the other foot had lost mass. This suggests that shocks to the bone, such as walking, trigger the laying of bone structure. Perhaps this knowledge will generate a cure for osteoporosis some day."

There are also likely to be further developments in the current obsession for mobile-phone use. Dumas, a company director of the Association in Scotland, says it will not be long before hand-held satellite telephones evolve towards "Dick Tracey-style wrist phones and jewellery". The first elements of the Iridium satellite constellation are already in orbit and under test, with two competing systems starting launches soon.

Phone communication will also improve over the next five to ten years through the benefits of nanotechnology (micro-machines) in space, according to Doug Millard, associate curator of space technology at the Science Museum. "We will see nanosatellites weighing less than one kilogram — some much smaller — which will dramatically reduce the cost of satellite launches and improve reliability in orbit. Thousands of low Earth-orbiting nanosatellites would provide at last truly global communication."

Meanwhile, the day-to-day job goes on. Necessity is the mother of invention, but the level of invention since the launch of Sputnik 1 in 1957 has been quite bewildering. Arthur C Clarke once observed that any sufficiently advanced technology was indistinguishable from magic. There is plenty more magic on the way yet.

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The fog lifts over Europe

But how long can Mr Blair keep the balance?

YESTERDAY'S meeting between Tony Blair and the 20 EU commissioners, over whom he will preside during Britain's six month presidency, was more of a love-in than a decision-making session. It was as if the fog had lifted in the Channel. M. Santer, the EU President, poured praise on a species thought to be extinct — a British administration that actually believed in a more integrated Europe. He welcomed Mr Blair's positive approach which was "as refreshing as it is appreciated". He said Brussels had been following with great interest Labour's economic reforms, the welfare to work concept, plus labour market and social security reform. He even started calling the Prime Minister "Tony". (How often did Europe's heads of state call Mrs Thatcher "Margaret"?). In return Mr Blair promised to play a constructive role in the negotiations to join the single currency (even though we are not yet part) and in the talks leading to enlargement of the EU.

Mr Blair's symbiotic approach involves persuading others to adopt flexible UK labour policies to alleviate the EU's alarming 10.7 per cent unemployment rate while using Europe's march to monetary union as a means of softening up Euro-scepticism in the UK. But the honeymoon won't last for ever. Mr Blair has already failed to secure a seat on the inner Euro-X council of countries fully signed up for monetary union. The problem of Europe's wandering Kurds has yet to be solved and six months won't be enough to solve surgical reform of regional policy and the absurdly costly CAP.

Mr Blair's tenacity will be dominated by the decision that won't go away: swapping the pound for the euro in 2002. Britain will find it easy enough to be an honest broker in May when the 11 candidate countries agree their condi-

tions for joining EMU. The timing of Britain's entry will depend partly on domestic politics and partly on the extent to which the European experiment is seen to be successful. At present strong confidence among politicians that the project will go ahead on time is marred by the descent of jitters among the populace as the date approaches.

For the first time since 1992, EU opinion polls give the pro-EMU camp less than 50 per cent of the votes. The Government is keen to enter when the time is ripe but knows that if EMU goes wrong during its first few years then it will be manna from heaven for William Hague and his Euro-sceptics. The calculus of balancing the political advantages of a more integrated Europe against the danger of an economic crisis may take longer to resolve than the electoral timetable allows.

In this context, Mr Blair may find his visit to Japan (he flew out yesterday) a serious learning experience. East Asia's economic problems — compounded yesterday by the market meltdown in Indonesia — could become a world problem if the Japanese economy sinks into a serious recession. Economists, particularly in the US, have been urging Japan to reverse last year's ill-advised tax increases in order to boost domestic demand and prevent the economy from being throttled. The trouble is that Japan already has a budget deficit equivalent to over five per cent of GDP. This is way above the three per cent ceiling laid down by the Maastricht Treaty for members of Europe's monetary union. Japan is being urged by the US to do something that wouldn't be possible if a similar situation arose within EMU for the UK or anyone else. That ought to be a sobering thought for anyone contemplating EMU entry. But at least when Mr Blair returns Europe's economic problems will seem trifling compared with those of East Asia.

Donald and the promised land

Mr Dewar is right to lead the way to Edinburgh

SO MOSES wants to see the promised land. Perhaps that's too hyperbolic an analogy for Donald Dewar's decision, announced yesterday, to complete his life-long quest for a Scottish parliament by entering it himself — but there is something romantic about the move. Since his days plotting with his beloved friend, the late John Smith, at Glasgow University's Labour club, Mr Dewar has yearned for self-rule for Scotland. He served nine long years as shadow secretary of state, he led last year's triumphant Yes-Yes campaign and this year he will pilot through the legislation allowing Scotland to govern much of its own affairs. Dewar's would be an unfinished symphony were he to pass the baton to another next year, when Scotland fights its first national election. Instead he has chosen to see the process through, by seeking a seat in the new parliament — and, with it, a likely perch as Scotland's first First Minister.

This is surely the right move for Mr Dewar. At 62, his Westminster prospects were not limitless. Widely admired for his lack of vanity, his kindness and sheer unflappable ability, he might have filled any number of Cabinet posts — but few would have excited the passion or devotion he feels in Scotland. Unlike Robin Cook, whose decision to stay at Westminster apparently cleared the way for yesterday's announcement, Mr Dewar has no designs on the top job in London. Rather than play out his career depart-

ment-hopping in Whitehall, he can be number one in Edinburgh instead.

Scotland, too, will benefit. The presence of a heavyweight like Mr Dewar will signal that the new parliament is more than a glorified authority for Greater Strathclyde — and certainly more than the parish council rashly suggested by Tony Blair during last year's election campaign. The fact that Donald Dewar does not harbour any ambitions beyond Scotland is an additional advantage. For all Mr Cook's talent, any stint he served in Edinburgh would inevitably have been seen as a mere stepping stone to Downing Street. That would have sent the wrong message, as if running Scotland were not a proper job — which it most certainly is. Finally, it will help that the founding leader of the Scottish parliament will also have been its architect. As the author of the devolution bill, Mr Dewar has a direct stake in making it work. He needs to prove, against the warnings of the Scottish Nationalists and the Conservatives, that Edinburgh's division of authority with London is not "inherently unstable" but viable.

Yesterday the SNP leader Alec Salmond welcomed Mr Dewar as a "worthy opponent" for May 1999, adding that no-one should presume a Labour overall majority. It's not a done deal, but Donald Dewar's decision should make a Scottish Labour victory next year more likely. He has been through the wilderness; now he can lead his people in their own land.

Mr Wei bears painful witness

It's time now to end the feudal customs of old China

IN IMPERIAL China the supreme ruler would dip his pen in vermilion ink before marking the names of those condemned to execution. A similar fate befell the Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng 18 years ago in Beijing. Though not actually condemned to death, Mr Wei was sentenced to 15 years and then — after a cynically short gap of half a year — back to prison for another 14 years. He might well have died: his health has certainly suffered. At yesterday's press conference organised by Amnesty International in London, he showed the consequences of spending half his adult life in harsh captivity.

Mr Wei was the first of the Democracy Wall activists to receive such a savage sentence (more would follow) because he had offended the new emperor Deng Xiaoping. In the political crises of the late 1980s, other campaigners fell foul of Mr Deng by pleading for a remission of Mr Wei's sentence. Bei-

ing has finally released Mr Wei on "medical parole" — in itself an admission that his health had been neglected. This serves an obvious diplomatic purpose after President Jiang Zemin's visit to the US. But even such a limited gesture might have been impossible if Mr Deng had not died last year.

The post-Deng leadership now has the chance to put this feudal legacy thoroughly behind it. Mr Wei and others have been punished almost entirely because of what they have written or said while exercising the right of free speech which is guaranteed in the Chinese constitution. The idea that those advocating heterodox ideas must be punished is a relic of state Confucianism. It has nothing to do with the modern society which the new leaders say they want to build. The clearest signal they could send now would be to release more of Mr Wei's colleagues — not on parole but as free citizens.



Letters to the Editor

An ideal homes policy

GEORGE Monbiot (Sprawling suburbia, January 7) should say in what way he thinks the Government's figure of 4.4 million new homes being needed by the year 2001 is wrong and by how much. Since the figure was published two years ago, there has been no serious disagreement about it from any source (and, incidentally, it has recently been updated to 6.5 million).

Monbiot's general objection to the notion of sprawling development seems to suggest that he thinks all the projected household growth should be accommodated in existing urban areas. This overlooks several awkward facts: that building on brownfield land in cities is expensive; that there is not much of it left; that it is desirable to retain some open land in cities for ecological and amenity reasons; that people don't like living at high densities; and that the greater proportion of the household growth is projected to occur in the shire counties of southern England and in the conurbations.

What we need to do is pursue urban regeneration policies that accept the limits to the amount of housing that urban areas can accommodate, and plan for new development on greenfield sites, which are well as great green spaces.

We do not think it sustainable to shoe-horn people into ill-located urban locations, where the lungs of their children will be filled with the fumes of passing traffic. We do argue for compact planned develop-

ment, both brownfield and greenfield, in the form of urban villages, where people can live close to work, clustered along top-quality public transport spines.

Only such a solution will allow us to maintain the vast majority of the countryside in tranquil seclusion. Monbiot's attitudes could well delay strategic planning, thereby running the real risk of peppercorn solutions: just what he — and we — would deplore.

Prof Peter Hall, Chair, Town and Country Planning Association, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AS.

GEORGE Monbiot is to be congratulated on his condemnation of sprawling suburbia. But it should be added that making better use of urban land for housing not only benefits the countryside but also helps to revitalise the cities.

The essence of urban living is a sufficient concentration of people to support facilities like shops, primary schools, etc, within walking distance of everyone's front door. This does not mean going back to tower-block housing, but rather to a modern equivalent of our Georgian streets and squares which, ironically, would not now get planning permission because they are well above the average local authority's maximum permitted density.

Harley Sherlock, Andrews Sherlock & Pears, 5 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6DR.

Dr Mo goes to prison with good wishes and unease

CONSIDERING that the Ulster Unionists held a permanent whiphand over the previous government, stopping them from meaningful negotiations during the first IRA ceasefire, it is more than a bit rich for Dr Brian Maguire to criticise Mo Mowlam for her willingness to talk with loyalist prisoners (11 takes courage to push things forward, January 8).

The Labour government has brought the first real ray of hope to Northern Ireland since Bloody Sunday, and Dr Mowlam is entitled to the unstinting support of everyone of goodwill. If she fails, the terrorists of both sides will be back, with the innocent suffering even more than the guilty.

Stewart Wood, Truro, Cornwall TR4.

I FIND it inexplicable that the inmates of the Maze appear to be able to determine whether the peace negotiations at Stormont should continue. It is unimaginable that any British politician would consider consulting imprisoned thugs on, for instance, constitutional change.

As someone born and brought up in the province, I do not understand why moderate unionists and republicans are not bombarding their elected representatives with letters telling them to stay in the peace talks. Shame on you people of Northern Ireland for letting the political system fall into such disrepute that the gunmen can dictate terms.

C E Mellor, Alwyne Road, London N1.

IT SEES that the Ulster Unionist leaders Ken Maginnis and David Trimble have started talking with loyalist prisoners inside the Maze. If they will wish to treat out the issue for not getting around the table because they don't negotiate with "terrorists", could they please explain the difference between Protestant (or loyalist) prisoners and Catholic (or nationalist) terrorists?

Deepinder Cheema, Holly Lane, Birmingham B24.

HOW predictable of you to Haneer at David Trimble for supporting Dr Mowlam's decision to visit loyalist prisoners in the Maze (Leader, January 8). Presumably, if he had joined Ian Paisley and other unionists in condemning the visit, you would have accused him of jeopardising the peace process.

Sean Fear, Aldenham Road, Radlett, Herts WD7.

WHY not make a specific offer to the prisoners, such as 10 days' remission of sentence for each day which passes without sectarian violence? Since there are more nationalists than loyalists in custody, it would equalise the inducement if loyalists received a proportionately higher rate of remission, say 11 or 12 days for each trouble-free day. Both sides would then have cause to work for a lasting settlement.

Ken Norman, Bowness-on-Solway, Carlisle CA5.

Identity crisis

I MUST confess to being somewhat shocked by the widespread reaction to my comments about football commentators and the identification of players (Why this man needs to visit his optician, January 5). No racist inference was ever intended. I offered an apology at the time, and this still stands.

With hindsight, I could have used other examples of the problems of identifying any players. Anybody who saw Gianfranco Zola play for Chelsea at Ipswich on Wednesday night will know how different even well-known players can look in the small matter of a new haircut.

John Motson, BBC Television, Wood Lane, London W12 7RJ.

THE adoption of English stereotypes by young, stylish purchasers of ready-to-wear clothing in Japan has progressed even further than Allison Goodrum suspects (Exports peddle Imperial image, January 7).

Among crowds on Kyoto subway platforms last month, I spotted a teenage wearing a familiar black jacket, decorated with orange PVC shoulder protectors and reflective patches. The view of his back as he passed revealed the words "British Coal" and confirmed my guess that redundant miners' donkey jackets have become this winter's fashion garment for Japanese youth.

Mike Swift, 47 Birchington Avenue, Huddersfield HD3 3RD.

COULD these bleeding-heart liberals to whom Hugh Nicklin so contemptuously refers (Letters, January 7) be the same bleeding-heart liberals who have secured for him the right to choose his newspaper, cast his vote, and indeed express his opinion that criminals should be identified by petty bureaucrats rather than by due process of law? I think we should be told.

Dr John Gardner, Reader in Legal Philosophy, King's College, London.



Safety first

THE drink-driving record of our European partners tends to disprove your suggestion (Analysis, January 5) that a lower blood-alcohol limit would save lives. France has five times as many road deaths as the UK, despite a 30mg limit. The estimate of a 12.9 per cent reduction in accidents is based on the Queensland experience, but as enforcement was increased at the same time, it is impossible to attribute the improvement to the lower limit alone.

The fear of getting caught and punished is more potent than the one-off publicity sur-

rounding a reduction in the limit. The UK needs to improve enforcement whilst maintaining the most draconian penalties in Europe. The Government should also resist the suggestion that lesser penalties might accompany a lower limit, as this would risk the offence of drink-driving being perceived as less serious. In Belgium, first-time drink-drive offenders are disqualified for three hours, by which time they are deemed to have sobered up: that is a joke, not a punishment.

Jean Coessens, Director, The Portman Group, 24 Wimpole Street, London W1M 7AA.

This diamond has a flaw

YOUR survey of recent events at De Beers and the future challenges for Nicky Oppenheimer, the new chairman. (Tough operator with many facets, January 3) did not mention an additional challenge for them — to stamp out child labour in the Indian diamond-polishing industry.

Last year, we discovered the extensive use of child labour among sub-contractors polishing De Beers' diamonds, and, in an era where consumers are becoming more conscious of the ways in which their purchases are produced, the company will need to satisfy customers that diamonds are not produced under conditions which exploit children.

Our discovery had repercussions in South Africa, since, when reporters from the South African Broadcasting Corporation broke the story there, South African miners were horrified by De Beers'

response that it had no responsibility for social conditions in India. They called on De Beers to stop supplying rough diamonds to companies which employ children.

In the world of globalisation, multinational companies like De Beers share responsibility for the existence of child labour. Since surely a company with massive profits could afford to pay decent wages to adult workers. Just a few per cent of De Beers' advertising budget would go a long way to pay for school places in areas where child labour is rife, as well as to finance programmes to rehabilitate working children.

Bill Jordan, Gen. Sec. Int. Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Jeff Hoymans, Gen. Sec. Universal Alliance of Diamond Workers, 84 Emile Jacquemain 155, Brussels.

It's those planners again

YOUR article on the listed sixties pebble-dash cottage (Report, January 8) exposes the fundamental flaw in conservation policies, which are intended to fix an acceptable appearance of buildings and environments.

Mr Stagg is quoted as saying that, historically, buildings have to change. Conservation policies allow planners to decide when they have changed enough. Then they cannot easily be returned to a better state, nor can they easily be imaginatively evolved further. In this case, by turning the evolution clock backwards, Mr Alexander has made the simple mistake of improving the appearance of his building. Planners are able to judge when a change has occurred, but, unfortunately, they are not always able to judge whether or not that

change is for the better. When they have the back-up of the listings regulations, there is a perfect excuse for them not having to exercise any judgment.

John Beech, Lilac Cottage, The Green, Redmarley, Glouce GL19 3JT.

MR Alexander's clash with the Forest of Dean council is symptomatic of a paradox at the heart of the conservation philosophy enforced by English Heritage, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and others. If the loss of existing fabric is never weighed against the intrinsic merit of alterations, what hope is there for historic buildings to evolve to reflect the genius of this age?

Sinclair A J Agate, 27 St Paul's Crescent, London NW1.

A Country Diary

NORTHUMBERLAND: Our Christmas Day was spent at Bamburgh, where our four children and 13 grandchildren, took a house for a week so that we could be with them and granny didn't have to cook. So you can think of me enjoying bracing walks along the shore when you read this diary. Both the National Trust and Northumberland National Park have interesting walks suitable for the family. I joined one at Crag-side, looking at the forest in winter with the head forester. Mature Douglas firs adjacent to Tumbleton lake are to be felled; the seeds were brought to Crag-side from North America by the 19th century planter, David Douglas, and were planted in 1870 by the first Lord Armstrong. Age has taken its toll," explained the forester. "These trees have become a threat to public safety, so we must fell them and thin others to encourage natural regeneration and create space and light for planting new young trees." The children enjoyed coming with me to walk Hadrian's

Wall with the park rangers. A drystone wall in our village is being repaired and also made an educational exercise. My stone-waller friend has trained eye and hand to work together so that he never lifts a stone at all unless it fits into one bed or another. "One upon two and two upon one, so you never get a straight joint in the wall," he explained, and if you look at our old walls you can see that is the logic of centuries. A true, drystone wall is built without cement of any kind, but the tendency is to wall on some farms with cement bands, like the Romans did, has become prevalent. Coping stones on top protect the wall, which should have rounded edges, and some farmers laid these coping stones on a layer of turf so that it grew and made the top more secure. Hogg the base to allow sheep and conies to get from one pasture to another, but stone-wallers are asked to block these up today, rather than make new ones.

VERONICA HEATH

Diary

Matthew Norman

THE world of etymology welcomes back a word not used in print (without irony) for decades. In attempting to attack Richard Ingram in the Spectator, my servant friend Taki-George takes a moment to consider the baby born to Ingram's lover, Deborah Bosely. "The black neighbour and natural father is to be involved with the upbringing of the child," writes T.G. Brace yourselves. "Good for Sambo... Go for it, Sambo, you'd be doing the kid a favour." How enchanting, the Commission for Racial Equality, Sir Herman Ouseley says he awaits a complaint, while Spectator editor Frank Johnson, just back from holiday, has yet to read the piece. "Let me have a look. Ah yes, poor old Ingram is getting it," says Frank. But what, we wonder, of the paragraph beginning "The Sunday Telegraph... Having located it, Frank reads aloud. 'Good for you, Sam... Oh my God.' Frank recovers to point out that, in his absence, the decision was left to 'someone else' (his deputy, Petronella Wyatt), but gallantly insists he would have published too, since "the whole point about Taki is his lack of taste." So the words "kike", "yid" and "nigger" would be fine, too? "Well," says Frank, "I'm not sure about 'nigger'." Ah well, that's these Spectator types for you... ever slaves to the forces of political correctness.

THE first Book of the Month for 1998 is Radovan Karadzic: My Defence, by Dejan Ljokic. While we consider its claims, a brief word of praise for translator Gordana Najdevic. "A well-intentioned reader of this book," begins the first sentence of the introduction.

UNDER pressure from Number 10 to be more dynamic and modern, the Foreign Office has gone into the schmutter trade, and is desperately trying to flag slick lies bearing the childish starfish logos designed for Britain's presidency of the EU. A memo circulating throughout Whitehall urges civil servants to buy them out of their own pockets. However, the FO has also said civil servants may use their departmental budgets to buy ties which they may like to offer as "official gifts" to their "customers". How sad for the MoD that the senior Saudis do not wear ties.

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The real truth about paedophiles — and us



Decca Aitkenhead

IT'S NOT easy these days to adopt a position so offensive that society is tempted to force you to keep it to yourself. Professors have been allowed to teach students racist theories; homophobic views, though perhaps thought unfortunate, are not unpublishable. But it came as no surprise that a Channel 4 documentary broadcast last night provoked considerable condemnation. It was, said one pressure group, "morally indefensible" to provide a "platform" for the interviewees and their "propaganda". The programme was called *The Devil Among Us*. The interviewees were paedophiles.

Most people who watched it will have found what the men had to say deeply troubling.

One believed that, "For a child, the ultimate sexual thrill would be to play naked and be photographed or videotaped... It does the child an awful lot of good." Another, in his 50s, saw no reason why an eight-year-old boy might not want to have sex with him; after all, he reasoned, he had a "kind personality". A convicted sex offender affected to see no reasonable objection to his running "safe houses" for "vulnerable" child prostitutes. In the week of publication of the report on Mark Trotter, a paedophile allowed to continue working with children despite repeated complaints, the documentary was genuinely shocking.

The case for banning it, however, was thin. There seems very little reason to fear that the general public will have listened to paedophiles last night on the telly, turned to each other and said, "You must admit they've got a point." A less persuasive collection of dysfunctional casualties would be hard to imagine. And viewers who share their sexual desires with children have engaged in their own elaborate process of self-justification — or downloaded

it from the like-minded off the Internet. In contrast, the programme makers' argument — that in order to tackle paedophilia, we must first understand the psychology behind it — seemed fair enough. But the other psychology we seldom if ever examine is that of the public's response to paedophiles. I have friends who are friends with muggers, will share a joke with a crack dealer, and go drinking with men who get drunk and cut up their girlfriends. Their take on parenting is frankly negligent.

BUT mention paedophiles to them, and they're under the bed hunting for baseball bats, thundering the language of moral outrage. There is no mystery in why they find the idea of men wanting to have sex with children abhorrent. There are some obvious and unproblematic explanations. We know more about the prevalence of paedophiles than we

used to, and have been told that they remain a menace for life. Alarming uses of the Internet are well reported, and newspapers have done their bit to expose paedophile rings. Parents who discover their neighbour has a conviction, even one 30 years old, are — in this context — understandably afraid.

But what motivates Tony Shepherd, the ex-soldier in the documentary who received a prison sentence for a quasi-military campaign of violence and intimidation against a local paedophile? Had he not been caught, he and friends had planned to kidnap their target and take him to a forest where he'd be "taught a lesson". They'd planned to "nail him to a tree". The paedophile's father was also a "legitimate target", for allowing his son to live with him. Mr Shepherd said he had "strong views" about sex offenders — but it seemed quite obvious that what Mr Shepherd really had strong views about was the possibility of honourably hating someone.

"We've exhausted the repertoire of people we can consider legitimate targets," observes cultural historian Richard Webster. "There used to be Jews and homosexuals but what do we have left? We've even lost communists, when they went and pulled the Berlin Wall down, which was disaster for paedophiles. They're the ones left to hate."

If paedophiles didn't exist, society would presumably find another group to satisfy the needs of righteous hate. But if you ask people about their violent fury toward paedophiles, they tell you to look at the figures. Child abuse is

everywhere! Fearful fury is the natural and proper emotion of parenthood. But we have always known about paedophiles, and our parents' parents will have warned them not to take sweets from strangers. The new discovery is the scale of child abuse going on in the home, yet the new panic is about the stranger in the park. A Bournemouth newspaper editor explained his campaign against a local sex offender to me by saying, "This isn't someone who did something with one of his own family. He assaulted three little boys in a park. Abuse within our families is just too difficult to confront, and so we invest heavily in the menace of the stranger. This may be the natural emotion of parenthood — but it is hardly the proper one, and certainly not the effective one for protecting our children."

THERE is a third and disturbing possibility fueling our hysteria about paedophiles. In Dan Jacobson's book about the Bible, he wrote of the Old Testament prophets: "The conviction that one is speaking on the side of virtue can be an immense force. It is a conviction that virtue itself would ordinarily compel one to forswear." When people tell you just what they'd like to do if they ever got their hands on a child molester, you sometimes see something verging on arousal.

If we are going to address paedophilia in any meaningful sense, it will involve confronting not just the strange man in the park, but ourselves.

Peter gives me a spiritual area under the Dome



Bel Littlejohn

IS THERE a God? Well, is there? To me, it's a question that continues to intrigue, and one — like EMU and the legalisation of cannabis and the future of the Spice Girls — definitely worth further exploration. For the record, I have a very strongly developed spiritual nature, but I suppose you could say I lean towards the less formal and rigidly dogmatic side of religion, as you would expect of someone whose spirit-guide is Little Running Water, a wise and beautiful Native American Squaw from the last century and my dearest and closest friend.

But like the present Archbishop of Canterbury, I am ecumenical in my approach: I like to share my revelations from my spirit-guide (Life is a fast-flowing river upon which only the swan glides slowly), with a wide circle of readers and listeners for whom established religions are too impersonal and doctrinaire.

As you know, I now have a regular slot on Radio 4's *Thought for the Day*. At the beginning of the week I called on the men of violence in Northern Ireland to come to their senses, and the week before, tying in with the release of the new *Spiceworld* movie, I said that in very real sense God, too, was *Spice Girl*, modern and full of life with a terrific self-deprecating sense of humour and, all in all, someone who was well worth pushing to Number One in all our hearts.

Small wonder, then, that with my extensive grounding in religion Peter Mandelson dropped round to my house just before Christmas on urgent business.

"Put your portfolio on the hall table and come through into the kitchen, Peter," I said, welcoming him.

"I'm without portfolio, Bel," he snapped.

"Sor-ree!" I replied. I love Peter to bits, but sometimes he can be a bit touchy. But he warmed up over a fork supper, and before long he had brought the subject round, as per u, to his plans for the Millennium Dome.

"**W**ERE going to turn and be asking all the big questions, Bel," he enthused. "Who are we? What are we doing here? Where are we going? How are we getting there?"

"Would you like more brie?" I asked.

"That too," he continued. "All the big questions under

one roof — that's the name of the Millennium game!"

It was then that he turned to me and looked me straight in the eye. "And Bel," he said, "I want you to be Chair of our Spirit Zone."

I was totally knocked sideways. "You've knocked me backwards, Peter! It's like being hit from behind!" I gasped. But then a still, small voice began to speak to me: a voice I recognised at once as Little Running Water.

"Your country is crying out for a high-profile multi-faith spiritual dimension Dome Zone to explore the relevance of faith in the 21st century within an ongoing cross-cultural environment, with provisional sponsorship from one of our leading household furnishings suppliers," whispered the still, small voice. At that instant, I knew that this was one job I simply had to do.

ILK ask it again. Is there a God? Well, is there? Over wide-ranging discussions with Peter, we sought to thrash out a clear answer to this long-standing question.

Basically, I took the line that there probably is some form of Higher Power, not a God exactly in the old-fashioned, paternalistic sense but a kind of spiritual *thing* or *dimension* through which we might recognise some sort of unity or spiritual *thing*.

Peter took an open stance, believing in a one-ness about the universe that sometimes makes you think there really is something out there, something beyond ourselves — after all, in an earlier life he was Ramesses II, King of Egypt, son of Seti I, builder of the great Rock Temples at Abu Simbel, precursors, in their primitive way, to the great Millennium Dome.

How should we convey the very real spiritual yearnings of the British people on the cusp of a new millennium within the overall framework of an interactive exhibition? Ongoing religious ceremonies? Prayer sessions? Exhibitions of religious art to demonstrate the impact of Christianity on Western Society?

To help us reach a firm conclusion, we journeyed together to Disney World by way of Miami, Florida.

Let me tell you this. It was a total revelation. We were knocked sideways by the tremendous spiritual energy of the Disney vision, and it'll act as the benchmark for all our future Domicilial plans. For the moment, it's strictly top secret, but when I tell you we plan teacup-rides around a life-size Garden of Gethsemane with real bunny-rabbits, a Mohammedmobile catapulting you into the truly magical fairytale world of Islam, and a virtual-reality Archbishop Carey transported around the Dome on a cloud at speeds of up to 35mph, I think you'll agree that, if there is a God, he'll be literally knocked backwards.

Michael White thinks Chris Patten may have blown his chance of being Mayor of London

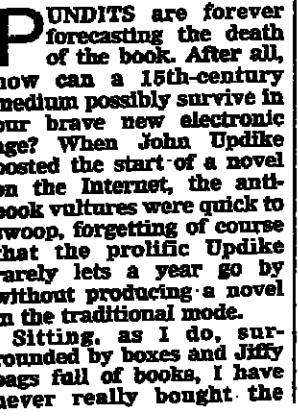
Turn again, Patten

FORGET about Europe. The most interesting thing about the Tory grandees' letter to the Independent this week was not the fact that Geoffrey Howe could still arm-twist old allies like Ted Heath, Michael Heseltine and Ken Clarke to sign up to its unappealingly childish starfish logos designed for Britain's presidency of the EU. A memo circulating throughout Whitehall urges civil servants to buy them out of their own pockets. However, the FO has also said civil servants may use their departmental budgets to buy ties which they may like to offer as "official gifts" to their "customers". How sad for the MoD that the senior Saudis do not wear ties.

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the fact that Hague is wrong to rule out British membership of the single currency for 10 years (why 10 years? If it is a matter of constitutional principle) does not make Patten right to re-enter British politics on this issue if he wants to be a real player, let alone candidate for Mayor.

That his enemies were quick to disparage him this week is a reminder that, at 53, Hong Kong's "Fat Pats" still has King-over-the-Water potential. He was crucial to John Major's 1992 win, absent from the subsequent slow-motion disaster when the bulls came in.

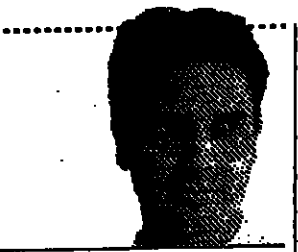
HE has also got a pretty big city. He is thus well-placed to be a semi-independent party candidate, the spot Jeffrey Archer is angling for with the help of a professional staff, that brilliantly self-promoting BT ad and his own special brand of *chutzpah*.

The Tories were smashed in London last May, but tides turn and no Mayor is a prize worth fighting for. Blzoner Mayor Chirac of Paris is now President of France. New York's Rudy Giuliani may be eyeing the same CV. That is perhaps why Times pundit Michael Gove, who was hampered Patten's ministerial record as "like his degree, solidly second-class".

Clever Mr Gove must have a first, but he is also Michael Portillo's loyal biographer. Mr Portillo faces similar dilemmas: how to get back and be loyal but available if disaster strikes young Billy? So far he has played a better hand, notably with his post-Diana speech on touchy-feely Britain at the Tory conference.

Mr Portillo has been here, of course. Mr Patten has been in Asia, writing in rural France and, over Christmas, in his new home in Barnes. But his tactics reveal a familiar weakness for pooh metropolitan media and heart-before-head stances which can do him no good. Archer and Portillo also like their names in lights, but they do not neglect the rubber chicken circuit. Lord Archer is president of the British Snooker Association. Should Chris take up darts?

Forget the Net: books are cool



Stephen Moss

PUNDITS are forever forecasting the death of the book. After all, how can a 15th-century medium possibly survive in our brave new electronic age? When John Updike posted the start of a novel on the Internet, the anti-book vultures were quick to swoop, forgetting of course that the prolific Updike rarely lets a year go by without producing a novel in the traditional mode.

Sitting, as I do, surrounded by boxes and Jiffy bags full of books, I have never really bought the

book-is-dead thesis. Around 100,000 titles are produced annually in the UK, prizes multiply, publishers lunch as avidly as ever, life appears to go on.

Now a fresh piece of evidence suggests that far from being dead, as the Netheads would have us believe, the book biz is actually hip, cool, happening, or whatever the 1998 equivalent is. Borders, a North American retailer which specialises in books and music, has announced plans to launch a chain of superstores in the UK. The sheer scale of the stores — the first will open in London's Oxford Street in August, the second in Leeds in the autumn — suggests confidence in the future of the book: but even more interesting is the way in which they differ from traditional bookshops.

What Borders hope to introduce to the UK is a cultural superstore: books (150,000 titles at the Oxford Street branch), CDs, videos,

magazines brought together in one shop and targeted at a youngish, culturally aware audience. The stores will also have the coffee shop and sofas that are becoming de rigueur in large bookshops.

The London-based Borders Etc chain, which Borders bought last autumn for £40 million, now has several stores with coffee bars and what might be called leisure areas, and Waterstones, which has pioneered a more user-friendly approach to bookselling in the UK over the past decade, last year opened a massive store in Glasgow's Sauchiehall Street with a basement café, lounges for reading, and purpose-built space for author events. The temptation to browse is apparently so great that some lunchtime visitors leave bookshelves in the books they are reading for the next day.

Increasingly, then, the bookshop will not be a dull, cramped, overcrowded lit-

tle shop smelling of pipe smoke, but a cool, carefully designed environment with thick pile carpets, attractive author portraits, tastefully arranged vases of flowers, a coffee bar (no doubt overpriced) and a sense of space. A place to sit, browse, read magazines (supplied free in some), and socialise, imbibing caffeine and culture in roughly equal measure, and even buying the occasional book.

THE war of the superstores — Borders' great US rival, Barnes & Noble, is also likely to enter the fray at some point — will help cultivate a new generation of book-buyers, but it would seem that generation doesn't need too much encouragement. Figures from Book Marketing Ltd show that 25 to 44-year-olds are the heaviest book buyers, and anecdotal evidence tends to bear out the statistics — a lunchtime visit to Books Etc's flagship store in Piccadilly suggested an average age of around 30, buying, browsing or stylishly being.

The type of books bought

also supports the argument that younger buyers are already being attracted. Publishers are increasingly abandoning the hardback in favour of less expensive "trade paperbacks" that use innovative packaging and promotional devices to pull in non-traditional buyers. The success of a book like Alex Garland's *The Beach* — a trade paperback for less than a tanner specifically targeted at the under-30s — shows what can be achieved.

Similarly, the "Bridget Jones" phenomenon points to the existence of a female 20-and-30-something market that publishers are now desperate to tap. Nick Hornby has a wide constituency and has established a genre of confessional, laid-back literature that sells through record stores as well as bookshops, and Irvine Welsh's success has led to a rash of books for the "chemical generation". If literature's past is the Gar-cher, perhaps the Ministry of Sound is its future.

Stephen Moss is the Guardian's literary editor

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Sir Frank Roberts

Our man of Europe

FRANK Roberts, who has died aged 90, was one of the most outstanding diplomats of his generation. He ended his career in the post most suitable to his talents and experience — that of British Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany from 1963 to 1969. This was a most important job and he did it superbly well.

From his earliest years in the service Roberts had won the confidence of successive foreign secretaries and indeed prime ministers — from Bevin, Eden and Churchill onwards to Michael Stewart, George Brown and Harold Wilson. He was all that a minister could ask for in a civil servant — well-informed, alert to the political wind, inventive in finding ways of making progress, indefatigable and loyal. Diminutive in stature, he was something of a human dynamo.

Roberts was the son of a British businessman in the Argentine and was born there. He was sent to school at Bedales and then Rugby and was an all-rounder at both establishments; he finished his Rugby school days as head of the school and a member of both the rugby and cricket teams.

At Trinity College, Cambridge, he took a first in history and after his fourth year came top in the Foreign Office examination of 1930. His first post abroad was Paris where he was private secretary to Lord Tyrrell and from there he went to Cairo where again he was private secretary to the ambassador. It was in Cairo that he met and married his beautiful Lebanese wife, Cella.

Back in London in 1937 Roberts began to be regarded as somebody who was always in the thick of the game, a sort of scrum-half of diplomacy. As a young second secretary in the Central Department (dealing with western Europe) his tasks included taking Secret Service reports over to Neville Chamberlain at 10 Downing Street. Thus it was Roberts who took to the House of Commons the telegram used so triumphantly by the prime minister at the end of his speech on September 26, 1938, reporting that Hitler had agreed to meet him at Munich.

As his career progressed it was often Roberts who drafted the necessary text or received the secretary of state's instructions or delivered an important message. He was one of the very small party accompanying Eden to Moscow in 1941 and was sent to Lisbon to help negotiate the Azores agreement of 1943.

In early 1945 he was a member of the British delegation at the Yalta Conference. Shortly after that he went to Moscow as number two in the embassy and was left for long periods in charge, during three vital years when the western governments relied greatly on his and his American counterpart's advice about Soviet policy.

It was in Moscow that Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin spotted Roberts and took him

on as his private secretary. Subsequently he was Bevin's right-hand man in discussions both with the Americans and the Russians over the Berlin airlift. As private secretary at that stage, he was perhaps too active and pressing to be altogether ideal so Bevin decided that he would like him to go off to India as deputy high commissioner in the entirely new environment opened up by the transfer of power which led to independence. There he acquired a first glimpse of the developing world, before returning to deal with German questions at the Foreign Office. From 1951 onwards, he was continuously engaged at the very heart of European affairs, first as a deputy under secretary, and then as ambassador successively in Yugoslavia, at Nato, in the Soviet Union, and in Germany.

Perhaps one of his greatest successes was as a key adviser to Anthony Eden in 1954. When the project for the European Defence Community collapsed, Eden stepped into the breach with his proposal for enlarging the Brussels treaty, bringing Germany into Nato and committing significant British forces to the defence of Europe. Roberts was Eden's principal adviser during the whole of that successful series of negotiations, ending with the October agreement at Lancaster House. Roberts, then still in his forties, can justly claim some part of the glory in this year in which Eden seemed to have the magic touch in international affairs.

Then, for the last dozen years of his service, Roberts had experience of Tito in Yugoslavia, of Spak at Nato, of Khrushchev in Moscow and of Erhard and Brandt in Germany. With all these diverse



Frank Roberts... the scrum-half of diplomacy, always in the thick of the game

PHOTOGRAPH: G. MACDONALD

personalities he contrived to establish excellent personal relations, thus easing the solution of the many problems that he had to deal with.

Roberts was amazingly active at every stage of his career and indeed remained active in mind and body until a very advanced age. When he was in the service he positively seized on any opportunity for action. I think that his staff in Bonn must have been relieved when he absented himself on some expedition to Berlin, Hamburg or Munich so that they could breathe more freely. He was very much what is called in business circles a "hands on" chief. I suppose that one of his few weaknesses may have been his unwillingness to delegate.

In retirement he took on a number of jobs, many of them deriving from his interest in Germany or in Russia. He and Cella lived in an elegant flat in Kensington adorned by a collection of icons about which they were both very knowledgeable.

They were very sociable and Roberts was a constant participant in discussions and debates at Ghattham House and elsewhere, especially those concerned with Germany or Nato. Thus he was president for many years of the British Atlantic Committee and also of the Steering Committee of the Anglo-German-Katzenbach Conference. For some 20 years after his retirement it was

rare to find him absent from any lecture or conference or even cocktail or dinner party concerned in some way with the defence of western Europe. He seemed to be always everywhere.

He was devoted to Cella who died in 1980, and took a little time to resume his full activity after her death. However, his natural resilience gave him a second wind and in 1993, at the age of 84, he wrote his diplomatic memoirs *Dealing with Dictators* — the record of a splendid career modestly told.

Roberts could look back with justifiable pride to his contribution to the reconstruction of western Europe and the re-establishment of Germany as a friend and ally. He was a truly remarkable man.

Alan Campbell

Frank Kenyon Roberts, diplomat, born October 27, 1907; died January 7, 1998

Maj-Gen Richard Clutterbuck

From war zone to classroom

RICHARD Clutterbuck, who has died aged 80, distinguished himself in two separate, if overlapping, careers. For 35 years he was a professional soldier, rising to the rank of major-general, and for the remaining 25 years he was an academic specialising in — indeed almost inventing — the study of violence in politics.

Like his father and grandfather before him, Clutterbuck was a sapper, commissioned into the Royal Engineers in 1937 after graduating in mechanical sciences from Cambridge. After Dunkirk, he went through both the Western Desert and Italian campaigns with no wound other than a front tooth knocked out when the driver of his scout car had to break suddenly and reverse.

I met him first in Germany towards the end of the second world war, when he arrived to take over 245 (Welsh) Field Company, Royal Engineers, the scruffy, practical, muley territorial outfit in which I was a raw sapper. The Welsh

mafia who really ran the company were at first suspicious of this English professional soldier, but were grudgingly impressed when, in the early days of peace, he hired a comely young German woman, Frau Schumacher, as his secretary.

Because he was a regular officer, Clutterbuck left us to go to a regular unit, 55 Field Company. This happened to be going to Trieste, and in retrospect this was the move which planted in him his future interest. Trieste was the site of the very first of the little civil wars and near-wars which have flared up since the big war. It had all the ingredients: political jockeying between Tito's communists and their enemies, ethnic tensions between Slavs and Italians, and violence that included the assassination of a British brigadier.

The army helpfully sent Clutterbuck to a further 13 hotspots over the years, from Palestine (1947) during the Irgun Zvai Leumi's terrorist campaign, to a comic opera crisis in Anguilla. In Malaya,



Clutterbuck... unmissable lectures

DEVON NEWS AGENCY

In 1955, up against Chinese communists, Lt-Col Clutterbuck shed his rank badges to go on patrol as an ordinary soldier. As chief engineer for Far East, 1956-68, Brigadier Clutterbuck put into practice in northeast Thailand the counter-terrorist philosophy he was gradually evolving. Isolated villages were prey to guerrillas. He got his sappers to build a road linking the villages to each other and the rest of the country. "Suddenly they had a bus service," he told me, "and there's a Latin American guerrilla saying that when the bus comes along it's time for the guerrilla to move out." His next job after Thailand was the top one, as Engineer-in-Chief (1968-70) at the Ministry of Defence. While in the Far East, however, he had started to read for a PhD in politics. In 1968, he enrolled at London University. It was pleasing to think of the E-in-C popping round to see his tutor in the official staff car embellished with a major-general's two stars on a crimson plate. I suggested, sadly, not true, he said, he went by tube.

His last army post was back in the specialisation he had created for himself, as chief army instructor of the Royal

College of Defence Studies, devoted to peace-keeping or "low-intensity operations" as they were now termed. His Who's Who entry gave his recreations as "sailing, canoeing and the study of revolution". On retirement in 1972 he became Dr Clutterbuck, and marched straight into the post of lecturer in political conflict at Exeter University.

Though the revolutionary fervour of the late 1960s had played itself out, students remained suspicious of military men. One piece of student journalism written ahead of Clutterbuck's arrival was so libellous that it had to be retracted. Once he was installed, not surprisingly, his students found him refreshing, and judged his lectures unmissable. They found him enthusiastic and eccentric, with spectacles colour-coded according to their strength and a wallet so often repaired with tape that the original leather had disappeared. He retired from teaching in 1982 but remained an honorary research fellow of Exeter.

BY NOW he was a world authority in his field, constantly in demand at conferences and the author of a score of books, beginning with *Protest and the Urban Guerrilla* in 1972, followed by *Riot and Revolution in Malaya and Singapore*, and gradually extending the borders of his subject to take in crime and other recourses to violence. His last work, completed shortly before his death, is *Families, Drugs and Crime*. Under the pen-name Richard Jocelyn he also wrote a novel *Across the River* (1987), based on his experiences as a sapper officer in the Italian campaign.

In his last years he suffered heart trouble and feared that his mental powers might be endangered. But his family believe he had completed all that he wished to achieve. He is survived by his wife, Angela, their sons Peter, Robin and Julian, and three grandchildren.

Philip Parker

Paul Wilkinson writes: Richard Clutterbuck's gift for teaching flourished at Exeter University, but his strengths as an educator reached far beyond the walls of the campus. There can be few senior military and police officers who have not at some stage benefited from Richard's mastery of his subject and his patience and good humour in tackling the most difficult questions. As if these achievements were not enough for one lifetime, he also helped to pioneer the development of the Control Risks Information Service, briefing business and industry on political violence around the world. The success of this work can be gauged by the number of security companies and businesses which depend on the methods of security analysis which he developed.

Richard was that rare combination: an intellectual former soldier who made a major contribution to a fresh field of academic enquiry, and succeeded in the wider work of public education through his books and contributions to the media.

Richard Lewis Clutterbuck, soldier and student of revolution, born November 22, 1917; died January 6, 1998

Richard Hornberger

RICHARD Hornberger, who has died aged 73, was a thoracic surgeon who served with the 8088th Central Postal Directory in the Korean war. Out of that experience, in 1968, came a novel *M*A*S*H* — the character of Hawkeye was a thinly veiled self-portrait — which he wrote under the pseudonym Richard Hooker. It was filmed two years later and a long-running immensely popular television series followed.

The film's tone, which came out of the 1960s and the anti-Vietnam war protest movement was not to Hornberger's taste. He was a Maine Republican, and more conservative than this is not known in North America.

Robert Altman's film represented values which so many of Hornberger's generation detested — long hair, smoking pot, sexual profligacy, and disrespect for the proud nation which he had served and continued to believe in. The gun-ho John Wayne in *The Green Berets* was more to his taste.

The television series, based more on the movie than Horn-

berger's novel, became one of the most enduringly popular programmes on CBS, running from 1972 until 1983. It was less raucous than the movie and less subversive. None the less, Hornberger, who after leaving the Army became a hospital physician, detested the series and claimed never to have watched it. He felt that Hawkeye, as interpreted by Alan Alda, was far too liberal.

With the collaboration of William E Butterworth, Hornberger, again as Richard Hooker, wrote 11 *M*A*S*H* novels in the 1970s. However they attracted little attention; the public appetite for Hornberger's story was happily satisfied by Altman and CBS.

He was perhaps not the last author to find that once he had sold the rights of his story to Hollywood, he had lost all control of it.

He is survived by his wife Hresilla, two daughters, two sons and three grandchildren.

Eric Hornberger

Richard Hornberger, physician and novelist, born 1924; died November 4, 1997

Birthdays

Joan Baez, singer, 57; Mary Bennett, former principal, St Hilda's College, Oxford, 85; Dorothy Davies, secretary general, International Federation of University Women, 85; Olive Dunn, actor and comedian, 76; Crystal Gayle, singer, 57; Father Benedict Green, theologian, 74; Terry Hands, theatre director, 67;

David Rothbrook, author, 75; Simon Jervis, geneticist, 48; Simon Jervis, director, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 55; Herbert Lom, actor, 81; Joely Richardson, actress, 31; Freddie Starr, comedian, 54; Scott Walker, singer, 37; Geoffrey Wragg, racehorse trainer, 68; Susanah York, actress, 56.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

THE GRAPHIC accompanying our story on benefit cuts (Page 1, January 5) over-simplified some changes. Industrial injury benefit is not being scrapped for pensioners, but eligibility for the reduced earnings allowance is being limited. Disability living allowance (DLA) is not being removed from people over 65, but fresh claims are being curbed. The DLA is not being withdrawn from hospital patients, but payment of the mobility component will have a time limit in line with the care component.

IN THE obituary of Sir John Coulson (Page 16 yesterday), an editing error led us to say, "Today, as Britain assumes the presidency of the 15-country EC." We should have said the 15-country EU.

IN THE obituary of Sir John Coulson (Page 16 yesterday), we inaccurately quoted Vibe magazine as saying that Poland is "a country with a population of less than four million". What Vibe actually said was "less than 40 million".

THERE were two mistakes in a table (Page 10, Guardian

Death Notices

EDWARDS, Margaret. Passed away peacefully on New Year's Eve, beloved wife of Jack and dearly loved mother of Sarah, Marion and Graham. We miss you.

JONES, Patrick Kenneth aged 77 died 27th December 1997 after a short illness in Queen Alexandra Hospital, Cosham, Portsmouth. Greatly missed by his family and friends.

Engagements

LOWE-HENRY, Dr and Mrs J. Lowe of Rosedale-on-Trent, Nottingham, have great pleasure in announcing the engagement of their eldest son Dr Simon Jervis to Miss Dorothy Davies, daughter of Mr and Mrs D. Davies of Inverness, Scotland. Betrothal ceremony at 11.30 on 11th January 1998 at 11.30 on 11th January 1998.

This weekend, a chance to stick two fingers up at your boss.

The Observer

You don't need to hand a plan, job, you need work, the new recruitment section that's got pages of senior appointments. This Sunday.

Jackdaw



No way Bombay

THE only way to really know a city is to live there all your life. It's the ultimate tourist trap. For a start, you'll arrive wreathed in preconceptions: Marrakech is heavy, São Paulo is filthy, Glasgow is drunk, Toronto is shut.

So, where is the best place to start? Where do you find the heart of a city? How do you take its temperature? Where do you stick the thermometer? There is only one way, one day, one night, one hit, tapping the pulse, finding the G-spot, meeting the right people, meeting the wrong people, buying Lady Luck a livener then groping her ugly mate. In, out, and if necessary, shaking it all about.

Drop Bombay into any conversation and soon enough

you'll hear the familiar credo: "Everything is for sale, nothing is free." It's a snappy tagline that neatly captures the city's moral ambiguity. But you just feel foolish popping into the tourist office and asking where you might locate the city's raw, bent beauty.

Twenty-four hours in Bombay? I'd give it five minutes if I were you.

Party people

WHILE anyone can be a good networker, relatively few people invest the time to systematically build up their connections... Meeting someone new, good networkers ask themselves: "How useful is this person to my entire network?" A poor networker asks: "What can this person do for me?"

Good networkers develop a reputation for helping others. And they benefit more than those who take the more selfish approach. For some this may require a leap of faith — but every good networker will confirm the old adage "What goes around comes around."

Director tells you how to make friends and influence people.

High hopes

EVEREST claims the life of one in four of those who make it to the top, yet there is no shortage of candidates. Once the exclusive playground of the climbing elite, Everest today is within grasp of anyone with modest ability, average strength and a lot of money. The so-called "Yak route", technically undemanding approach from the South Col, can now be ascended by climbers hitched to fixed ropes under the watchful eye of Sherpas and the entrepreneurs who pay them. It



Director... network news

is the advent of "high altitude guiding" that has made the difference. Qualifications that were a prerequisite twenty years ago are no longer essential. But ascending Everest remains enormously hazardous, however experienced the climber. Paying to realise someone's dreams does not guarantee a safe home. In the spring of 1996, Everest killed 12 people — the worst single season death toll since Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing first climbed it. Some had paid as much as \$65,000 for the experience.

At altitude, the extreme cold compromises equipment and bodily functions. All lifelines are vulnerable to its own senses, human tissue, the oxygen mask. But it is undoubtedly the thinness of air which most often constrains, and may even kill those daring or foolishly enough to strike at the summit of the world's largest mountain.

The lure and danger of Everest. *London Review of Books*.

Jackdaw wants Jewels. E-mail: jackdaw@guardian.co.uk. Fax: 0171-713 4995, or in Jackdaw, The Guardian, 115 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

Hannah Pool

تسکات من الاجل

Currency falls to just a quarter its 1997 value • IMF under fire for its merciless insistence on cuts

Indonesia set to default on its debts

Nick Cunningham-Bruce
in Bangkok
and Mark Tran in New York

BANKS fear that economically battered Indonesia could default on its international debts after dramatic falls in the rupiah yesterday slammed into currencies and share markets round the region.

The fall in the rupiah's currencies has prompted increasing concerns that the bail-out packages led by the International Monetary Fund for Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea are ineffective.

The World Bank yesterday criticised the IMF, its sister organisation, for insisting on cuts in government spending and higher taxes to qualify for IMF funds.

"You don't want to push these countries into severe recession," said Joseph Stiglitz, chief economist at the World Bank. "One ought to focus on things that caused the crisis, not on things that make it more difficult to deal with."

Fears that Indonesia could default on its foreign debt intensified yesterday, after the rupiah fell by 22 per cent to 10,000 to the US dollar, before recovering slightly at the close. The weakness of the rupiah, which stood at only 2,500 to the dollar six months ago, means that dollar-denominated debt is now dramatically greater in local currency terms. Analysts estimate Indonesia's foreign debt of \$133 billion represents twice the nation's annual production. Currency weakness pushed Indonesian share prices 12 per cent lower yesterday.

"We are in a meltdown," said Bill Keeling of Dresdner Kleinwort Benson in Jakarta. "There is absolutely no way

the majority of companies will be able to service their loans and it's almost impossible to see how the government can service its loans either."

To add to western worries, Asian analysts fear that an Indonesian debt default will force other governments in the region to follow suit.

Thailand, the beneficiary of a \$17.2 billion IMF rescue package but burdened by some \$30 billion in short-term debt, looks the most vulnerable, as the baht has fallen by more than 50 per cent against the dollar since it was floated in July.

Thailand's finance minister, Tarrin Nimmanhaeminda, will travel to Washington in mid-January to seek new terms for IMF support. But Asian economists agree with World Bank criticism of the IMF that demands for fiscal tightening are only adding to a downward spiral of asset deflation and liability inflation in the economies it is attempting to rescue.

"What was essentially a liquidity crisis with some substantial structural problems has been made considerably worse," said Andrew Fris of Bank of America in Hong Kong. "Corporations have to earn money to pay back their debts. Encouraging recession is most definitely not the cure."

Bankers' opinions continue to differ sharply on appropriate solutions. "The feeling in dealing rooms is that the US and Japan and perhaps the IMF are quite a long way from taking this situation seriously and doing something that may change the course of events," said Kobus van der Walt, chief treasury economist for the region at Standard Chartered Bank in Singapore. "That means the crisis stays regional, it's not contained."



Confidence trick... Samsung Life Insurance staff have been ordered to shout upbeat slogans in the Seoul streets to help defeat South Korea's financial crisis PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL BARKER

Providing IMF with a cure for Asian flu

Member nations are digging deeper to support the ailing Far East economies. But, as Alex Brummer reports, this is a long process and managing director Michel Camdessus is seeking much more

THE International Monetary Fund, which has so far pledged loans of \$20.7 billion (\$12.75 billion) to deal with the Asia crisis, obtains most of its cash from its biggest shareholders — the Group of Seven largest industrial countries.

Much of the rest of the money that has been mobilised for Far Eastern countries, including the \$55 billion for Korea, is being provided by the World Bank and the regional development banks, which can borrow on the commercial markets.

The Fund's lending resources are obtained through "quotas", which are cash pledges made by member governments. The IMF is almost entirely dependent on this source as well as the

reserves it builds on charging interest on its loans.

Following the rescue it has so far mounted in the Far East, in addition to loan commitments in Russia and the new democracies of Eastern Europe, the IMF yesterday estimated that it has a further \$40-45 billion of resources to meet future loan demand.

At the last annual meeting of the IMF held in Hong Kong in October, the main shareholders, including the United States, voted to increase the IMF's lending resources by 45 per cent from the current \$200 billion, creating a further \$90 billion of new quotas. But the cash did not become immediately available since every shareholder, from the United States with some 18 per cent, to the

smaller poorer countries needs to pass legislation authorising the increase.

The managing director of the IMF, Michel Camdessus, at the start of his third term in the job, has made it clear that he believes that the Hong Kong decision on a capital increase was inadequate given the scale of the crisis in the Asian markets.

In recent speeches and pronouncements he has promoted the idea of a doubling of the IMF's quotas — share-

holders' funds — to around \$400 billion. Although historically the IMF has not borrowed on the commercial markets, it does have access to emergency funding by the General Arrangements to Borrow, which was also expanded in Hong Kong.

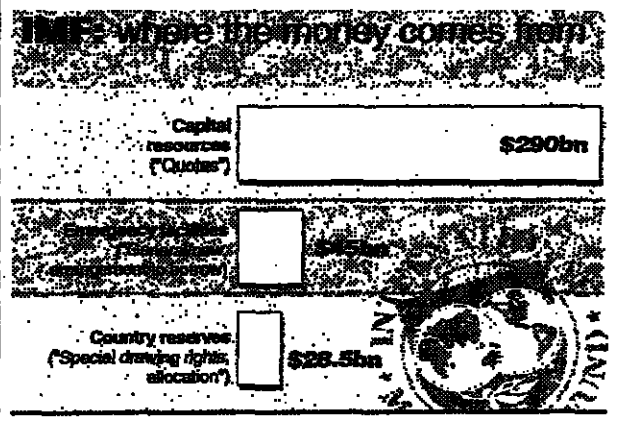
The last time the General Arrangements to Borrow was invoked was more than two decades ago when the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, Denis Healey, was forced to

borrow from the IMF to support the pound. Under the New Arrangements to Borrow, which supplements the GAB, the IMF has recourse to up to \$45 billion of borrowing for tackling financial emergencies.

Coincidentally, among the reasons for expanding the GAB was to give the IMF access to the huge volumes of reserves held by the Asian countries. These included Thailand and South Korea, both of which are now on the sick list.

Among the recent problems the IMF has had to deal with is a misallocation of resources. Most of the surplus resources, held in the Fund's paper currency the special drawing right (SDR), have been held by the richest countries, which have least need for them.

It was, however, agreed in October that there should be a redistribution of these reserves — to the value of \$22.5 billion — to provide extra cash for new members like Russia and the Ukraine. Additional reporting by Jonathan Levi



Russia shows first signs of rising from sick-bed

LAURIE LAIRD
reports on hopes for a post-Soviet turnaround

THE Russian economy showed signs of life in 1997 after enduring nearly a decade of ill health. Figures yesterday showed the country's first expansion since the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 — though Russia is still weaning itself off international Monetary Fund medication.

The IMF board last night approved a \$700 million (\$435 million) loan, a payment that had been delayed as the IMF evaluated whether Russia could collect enough taxes to meet its 1998 budget. The IMF was to discuss Korea at the same meeting yesterday. Previous IMF aid helped Russia to produce a 0.4 per

cent increase in gross domestic product last year, according to data released yesterday by the Russian state statistics organisation, following a contraction of more than 5 per cent in 1996.

The expansion accelerated toward the end of the year to more than one per cent in the final month of 1997, the prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, said yesterday.

While the service sector has been growing for several years, Moscow analysts said a recent rejuvenation of manufacturing industry tipped economic growth into the black. "In previous years we've seen sharp declines in manufacturing and in agriculture," said Vladimir Pantyushin, an economist at Credit Suisse First Boston in Moscow. Industrial output grew by 1.9 per cent in 1997, with most of the expansion coming from increased production of con-

sumer goods, such as textiles and cars.

However, economists suggest the bulk of Russia's economic growth is coming from Moscow while economic conditions outside the capital lag far behind. "Moscow is definitely leading GDP growth," said Mr Pantyushin, adding that strong growth in the service sector could help the Russian economy grow by more than 2 per cent this year — but that most of the nation's services are concentrated in Moscow.

The news of renewed health did little to help Moscow's stock market, which is suffering in sympathy with the ailing markets of the Far East. The Russian Trading System of 21 shares tumbled by 6 per cent yesterday, though analysts expect Russian share prices to stabilise. "We don't expect high volatility. We look for steady growth in share prices," said a Moscow stock market analyst.

Soap and chocs no lottery for Cadbury

CADBURY will combine two of television's biggest game shows to launch a £1 million Coronation Street lottery, writes Roger Cowie.

"Watch and Win Lottery" will feature the commercial break halfway through each

of the four weekly episodes of the soap, running soap opera, which has been sponsored by the confectionery company for more than a year.

From February 2, a series of four winning numbers will appear as part of the sponsorship credit either side of the break. The broadcasts will

continue until the end of March and each night's numbers will also be available on a telephone recording and on Cadbury's web site.

Numbers will be printed inside wrappers of Cadbury's Dairy Milk and other bars such as Fudge and Wispa. Five wrappers will have all

four numbers matching one of the broadcast series and will each win £25,000. Holders of wrappers with three matching numbers will win £10, while one or two matches will entitle the holder to discounts at outlets of Granada, which produces the soap.

Total winnings over the two

months of the promotion will amount to £1 million. A spokesman yesterday described the promotion as "a bit of fun" and dismissed suggestions that it would take money from the National Lottery, which Cadbury also has an interest in through its part-ownership of Camelot.

Mark Tran in New York

MICROSOFT's image has suffered in its current legal battle with the US Justice Department, a top official at the computer software group has admitted. Another Microsoft official apologised for provoking US regulators.

Executive vice president Steve Ballmer, the right-hand man of chairman Bill Gates, said that recent focus groups and electronic mail messages show an increase in negative attitudes toward the company among professionals and consumers.

"The number of people who are enthusiastic about the

products and the company has clearly taken a dip," Mr Ballmer told the Wall Street Journal. "It's not cataclysmic but it's clear."

In a further step toward thawing relations with US authorities, Microsoft chief operating officer Robert Herbold yesterday said the company is sorry for any statements that might be disrespectful of the Justice Department.

Microsoft has been delayed by negative publicity after the Justice Department accused it of violating a 1995 anti-trust agreement by requiring computer makers to include Microsoft's Internet Explorer as a condition of licensing its

Windows 95 operating system. Last month Microsoft was ordered by federal judge Thomas Jackson to desist.

Microsoft responded by offering consumers two choices: delete the browser and damage the operating system, or use an older version of Windows without the browser. The Justice Department accused Microsoft of contempt of court. Mr Ballmer admitted that Microsoft faced a tough battle in convincing consumers of the company's position. "We are an aggressive company and I remain unapologetic for that. On the other hand, I don't like it that people think of us as a harsh company."

Sweet tooth, juicy profits

Roger Cowie

WITH snacks increasingly replacing sit-down meals, the consumption of chocolate is showing a bulge. Last year, the average Briton swallowed 16 kilograms of chocolate, sweets and mints. Way ahead of nearest rivals Denmark, Belgium and Switzerland, the British Isles has become the confectionery centre of the world, beating the fabled sweet tooth of the Americans by consuming 60 per cent more than that eaten in the United States.

Consumption has risen by a sixth over the past 10 years. Although hot weather last year was bad news for chocolate, the volume of sales remained the same as that in 1996, producing 2 per cent more cash in shops' takings. With a 6 per cent rise in money spent on sweets, total confectionery spending in the UK soared past \$5 billion for the first time.

Alan Palmer, marketing

director of Cadbury, which published its market review yesterday, welcomed the figures. He predicted that British families would eat even more sweets and chocolate this year as part of a general trend towards snacking, with fewer formal meals.

"Snacking has changed the way we live, and we see significant future growth opportunities from it," Mr Palmer said. Higher consumption was not necessarily bad for health. "There's no such thing as a bad food, only bad diet. Chocolate can be a valuable part of a balanced diet."

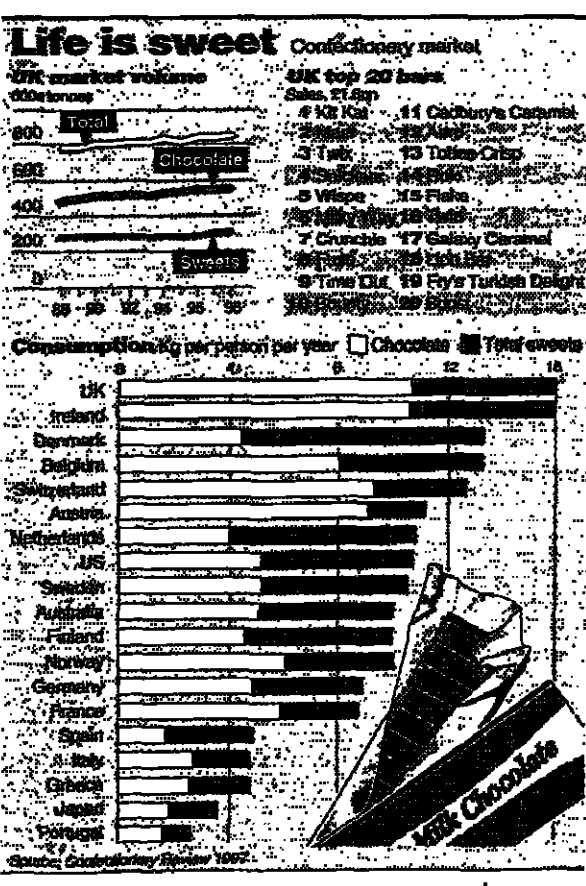
Mr Palmer also shrugged off attempts by the European Parliament to stop Cadbury calling its product "milk chocolate" — since it contains vegetable fats and other fats as well as cocoa butter. He said Belgian chocolate is "locked to Britain to buy Cadbury's products, and, in the past few years, the company had widened its lead over Mars and Nestlé in the UK. More than 100 million Creme Eggs

would be exported to the US in the spring.

Cadbury's Dairy Milk continues to dominate the "moulded block" sector in the UK, while Roses chocolates still beat Quality Street and seem unaffected by the launch of Mars' Celebrations. Nonetheless, Cadbury products struggle in the chocolate-bar top 10. Nestlé's Kit Kat stays at number one, ahead of Mars, Twix and Snickers.

The consolation for Mr Palmer has been the appearance at number eight in the bar charts, of Fudge, Cadbury's latest product, launched in a blaze of publicity last autumn. The next attack comes with the relaunch of a golden oldie, Cadbury's Snickers.

Meanwhile, in the sweets market, fruit flavours are battling it out. Maynards wine gums ousted Rowntree's fruit pastilles from the top slot, thanks to its "set the juice loose" advertising campaign which appeared on half the nation's bus fleet, covering an estimated 56 million miles.



Gates gets the message

Mark Tran in New York

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AT&T fights phones war

Mark Tran in New York

WAR between America's long distance and local telephone companies is about to intensify as AT&T closes in on an \$11 billion (£7 billion) acquisition of Telecommunications companies spun off from AT&T in the early 1990s.

Although Teleport is still losing money, it boasts a

presence in more than 60 US markets, including the prized ones such as New York and Los Angeles.

The 1996 Telecommunications Act was supposed to have unleashed a free-for-all between local and long distance phone operators, but the Baby Bells have fought legal battles to keep AT&T and competing long-distance carriers MCI and Sprint out of local markets.

Teleport, based in Staten Island, New York, offers local phone services mainly to business customers — a competitor to the regional Bell companies spun off from AT&T in the early 1990s.

A proposed deal between British Telecommunications and MCI fell by the wayside partly because of MCI's prospective losses in trying to break into local markets.

MCI blamed the expected losses on foot-dragging by the local companies. MCI eventually decided to team up with WorldCom, the brush long distance company from Jackson, Mississippi, in a record \$37 billion deal.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS			
Australia 2.46	France 9.63	Italy 2.852	Singapore 2.80
Austria 20.28	Germany 2.8018	Malta 0.6298	South Africa 7.78
Belgium 38.48	Greece 4.863	Netherlands 2.375	Spain 242.28
Canada 2.26	Hong Kong 12.19	New Zealand 2.79	Sweden 12.82
Cyprus 0.8462	India 64.31	Norway 11.87	Switzerland 2.329
Denmark 11.05	Ireland 1.1558	Portugal 293.55	Turkey 323.250
Finland 8.61	Israel 5.76	Saudi Arabia 5.97	USA 1.5842

Sourced by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli sheqel).

Tomorrow: Blair woos the music industry

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
Telephone: 0171-239-9610
Fax: 0171-833-4456

FinanceGuardian



LOUISE Trewhas was dressed for the occasion at Earl's Court yesterday when she received a grant on the eve of the International Boat Show from the English Sports Council for

\$15,787 towards buying a new boat for her Islington, north London, diving club, writes Nicholas Bannister. At the show, boat-builders, sailmakers, chandlers and marina owners

are today signing an agreement to help Customs and Excise in the battle against drug smugglers. The British Marine Industries Federation, most of whose 24,000 members work on

or near the coast, is to provide the authorities with extra eyes and ears to clamp down on smugglers. A BEMIF spokeswoman said that under a memorandum of understanding with

the Customs and Excise, its members would report anything suspicious. The move comes when Britain's marine industry is riding the crest of a wave. Sales for 1997 are thought to

be well up on 1996's \$2.28 billion. But growth has slowed in the face of the strong pound, which has hit exports and encouraged cheaper imports. PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

Notebook

Getting rid of an old headache



Alex Brummer

THE Office of Fair Trading's decision to challenge retail price maintenance for over-the-counter drugs was inevitable. As was the case with the net book agreement, before it was swept away, the more adventurous retailers like Asda already have demonstrated that commercial laws — which no longer make sense — are there to be challenged. Retail price maintenance is a bit of post-war interference in the free-market mechanism which no longer makes great sense.

There will, of course, be cries of anguish from the Community Pharmacy Action Group which is to meet Baroness Jay, the Health Minister, today. In the case of the smaller chemist outlets, of which there are some 12,000, this will be genuine.

Although the larger part of their profits come from the NHS, via prescription medicines, over-the-counter products are a nice little earner. And no doubt when the earner is extinguished, up to 2,000 of their number could vanish as the retail consultants Verdict predicted in December.

The main cause of confusion has been the alliance between the smaller pharmacies and Boots and Unichem, which to some extent have been hiding behind the smaller pharmacies' skirts. These players know an all-out price war with the supermarkets covering branded

over-the-counter products, would dig deeply into their margins and profitability. But they can afford it and the consumer would benefit after all Boots in recent years has generated enough cash to give it back to shareholders by the bucketful.

There are then social arguments. First, discounting drugs is not necessarily that wonderful an idea, with so much dependency around. Second, the smaller chemists play such an important role in alleviating the pressure on GPs and the NHS, that they need all the help they can get. Both cases have some resonance: as apparent support from 80 per cent of Labour MPs, including Frank Dobson, would indicate.

But the paramount case is that consumers are able to access the over-the-counter products at the lowest possible price. It is a pity that it has taken the OFT so long to take the action it promised 15 months ago.

Amazon hit

THE perils of Internet dependence for a commercial brand has just been demonstrated at Amazon, the money-losing US bookseller which has risen to prominence on the back of its 2.5 million book bestlist — much of it on sale at discount prices.

The company's Internet site was down for much of the trading day on Wednesday, damaging its reputation for reliability at time when it is facing a tough on-line struggle with Barnes & Noble and rising distribution costs.

All is not, however, lost. Although the company's share price took a hit, customers who failed to connect are now being offered an extra 10 per cent discount — a sort of snafu sale.

National Savings reduces payout • Bank of England stands firm • Retailers rue consumer sobriety

Interest rates on the cusp

Larry Elliott, Rupert Jones and Roger Cowe

NATIONAL Savings interest rates were cut last night for the first time in two years, amid renewed hopes in the City that base rates might at last have peaked.

In a double helping of good news for borrowers, the Bank of England monetary policy committee decided at its monthly meeting to keep base rates on hold while the improved medium-term outlook for inflation prompted National Savings to trim

rates on five-year bonds and savings certificates. The belief that prices are being kept under control, coupled with the deflationary potential of the East Asian crisis, has brought down medium and long-term interest rates on government bonds in the City, and National Savings officials said they were responding to this trend.

We have held off for as long as we can but it has come to the point where we have to make these reductions," a spokeswoman said.

Some City analysts believe that the Bank may nevertheless be tempted into a further

quarter-point rate rise at next month's meeting of the monetary policy committee, should the economic data over the next few weeks point to a surge in consumer spending or a pick-up in wage pressure. However, the Confederation of British Industry reported yesterday that retailers' business for the key month of December had been good but not spectacular.

After a lacklustre November, retail sales bounced back last month but the CBI's distributive trades survey found little evidence of consumers using the proceeds of last summer's windfalls to fund a spending spree.

Some 54 per cent of retailers said sales in December were up on a year ago, while 19 per cent said they were down. The CBI said the figures were broadly in line with the expectations of shops and stores, but that the underlying rate of growth was weaker than a year ago.

A clutch of companies yesterday confirmed that December sales had been better than many retailers had feared thanks to a late rush in Christmas week.

Signet, the jeweller, said its H Samuel shops saw only a 1 per cent increase in sales over the Christmas period, although sales at its Ernest

Jones chain were nearly 7 per cent higher than in 1996.

Majestic Wine Warehouses, JJB Sports and Joplings department stores all reported double-figure increases, well ahead of the 8 per cent reported by the Burton Group on Tuesday, which first suggested that consumers had finally unspooled their wallets and purses in the last days before Christmas.

Simon Briscoe, chief economist with City firm Nikko, said all the signs were that the boost to high-street activity in late December and early January had been provided by heavy discounting, which would help check inflation.

"The policy conclusion is that rates should be left on hold until the outlook is clearer," he said.

The Bank's decision to peg rates hit the pound, which fell by 2.5 pence against the German mark to just under DM2.94.

New sales of five National Savings products are affected by the cuts in rates of between 0.25 percentage points and 0.5 percentage points. They are: Fixed interest savings certificates, index-linked savings certificates, pensioners' bonds, capital bonds and children's bonus bonds. The changes do not affect existing bonds and certificates.

Enthusiasts try to keep R-R British

David Gow and Nicholas Bannister

VICKERS yesterday took the first concrete step towards disposing of its Rolls-Royce and Bentley luxury-car business when it sent preliminary sale details to a small group of prospective buyers.

The document, detailing the car company's history and financial record and including some details about its planned new models, has been sent to a handful of "serious" buyers selected by the engineering group's bankers.

The initial shortlist includes the three big German car makers, BMW, Volkswagen and Daimler-Benz. Others on the list are Ford — the American car group which also owns Jaguar — Chrysler, Toyota, and Fiat.

The British interest is represented by Bertie Ecclestone's Formula One Holdings, and by the Rolls-Royce Action Committee, a group of 10 owners of the luxury car dedicated to keeping the business out of German hands.

The action committee is seeking to raise £680 million in an audacious attempt to buy the company and provide funds for future investment.

The committee members last night said: "A large number of people find it unacceptable that Rolls-Royce Motor Cars should be sold to a foreign manufacturer. We are setting about the task of finding a UK purchaser or purchasers for the company and raising sufficient funds to develop new models."

Its members gathered to plan strategy yesterday at an old hunting lodge in Northamptonshire now used by the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts Club.

The committee is talking to a number of wealthy individuals and has arranged to meet Mr Ecclestone to see if their efforts can be combined. It wants a successful British bid to lead to a listing on the London stock exchange.

The next step in the Rolls-Royce auction will get underway when the shortlisted bidders receive the latest financial information and internal forecasts.

Vickers and Lazard, its financial advisers, hope to start detailed discussions with just one or two potential buyers, who would receive the latest financial information and internal forecasts.

Vickers hopes that the sale can be completed by April or May this year and that the proceeds can be reinvested in its remaining defence and propulsion operations.

BMW is widely regarded as the front runner, but it is known to be concerned about overpaying. Industry sources believe that BMW's management is considering a bid of between £200-£250 million, while Vickers is looking to raise at least £400 million.

Volkswagen has deeper pockets than BMW but could well prefer to invest its funds to establish itself as a truly global car manufacturer. Industry experts believe that Daimler-Benz is likely to be outbid by its German rivals.

Ford said yesterday that its "stated position" was still that it was not interested in buying the Rolls-Royce car business.

Vickers yesterday reported sales of Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars rose by 10 per cent to 1,918 vehicles during 1997. The strongest demand came from the United Kingdom where turnover rose 38 per cent.

Directors create an increasing gulf between themselves and their staff

David Gow

COMPANY directors are ignoring pleas from the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, to curtail boardroom greed, awarding themselves pay rises four times the increases they give their employees, the TUC said yesterday.

A report, based on research into pay-levels at 363 firms in 1994 and 1997, shows that the average ratio between the highest-paid director's salary and average employee pay

has risen a third over the three years to 1997. The report, Wider Still and Wider, shows that average highest-paid director salary has increased from £204,160 to £312,910 in 1997 or 53 per cent (16 per cent annually). Average employee pay, meanwhile, has risen by 4 per cent a year or 13 per cent overall from £17,240 to £21,410.

The TUC says that this under-estimates the problem as the figures for directors' pay exclude income from shares, share options or long-term incentive plans, which

can double, triple or even quadruple take-home pay.

"It is depressing to see that boardroom greed is still alive and well and that the pay gap continues to grow," said John Monks, the TUC's general secretary. "A director being worth 12 times an employee in 1994 and 16 times in 1997 is morally, socially and economically unacceptable."

"There is clearly one rule for directors and another for the rest. This undermines employee morale and motivation in the workplace. It contributes to the rising inequality

which is damaging British society. And it condemns corporate Britain to the public's low esteem."

Mr Monks said tackling excess boardroom pay was crucial to the Chancellor's calls for general wage restraint and essential to restoring public confidence in British firms. Presenting his spending plans in November, Mr Brown insisted that pay moderation would ultimately promote stable growth and save jobs while greed would stoke up inflation, provoke recession and damage employment.

Snug with two in a bed

Ian Kling

THE normally soporific world of bed manufacture was jolted awake yesterday by the news that two of the grandest names in slumber equipment will merge together.

Silentnight, maker of one in five of all beds sold in Britain, is hoping to snuggle next to Rest Assured, paying £3 million for the privilege. A relative bunk-bed in comparison

to the mighty four-poster that is Silentnight, Rest Assured has less than 2 per cent of the market and lost £581,000 in the year-end to 1996. But almost a 100 years old, it is established in the middle and upper bed markets.

Langishing at the moment as a non-core activity of eighties go-go stock turned sober nineties household fittings group Spring Ram, Rest Assured, in Batley, is not far from Silentnight in Colne.

The deal, to be completed by the end of the month, coincides with change on the British bed scene. The great divan terror is waning as bedsteads with proper head and footboards regain popularity.

Single beds are becoming less popular, with doubles increasingly common. Doubles are getting bigger, giants of 62 cms by 61 cms supplanting the standard 54 cms by 48 cms. And good back support is serving the health-conscious. Britons spend half a billion pounds a year on beds.



Armani fashions profitable second spot in Italy

GIORGIO Armani, Italy's leading fashion designer, yesterday found himself tripping down an unusual catwalk as analysts at one of the country's most influential banks named his group the country's second most profitable company, John Glover writes from Milan.

According to R&S, the research arm of Mediobanca, the secretive Milan merchant bank, in 1996 — the

most recent figures available — the Giorgio Armani group could boast profits amounting to 29.2 per cent of its net sales of 1.19 trillion lire (\$411 million).

This put Armani just one tenth of a point behind the profits of 29.3 per cent of sales clocked up by Fratelli Brera, best known as the makers of a liqueur called Fernet Branca. Its admirers swear by the concoction as a "digestivo", detractors

find it reminiscent of distilled radiator flushings and sugar.

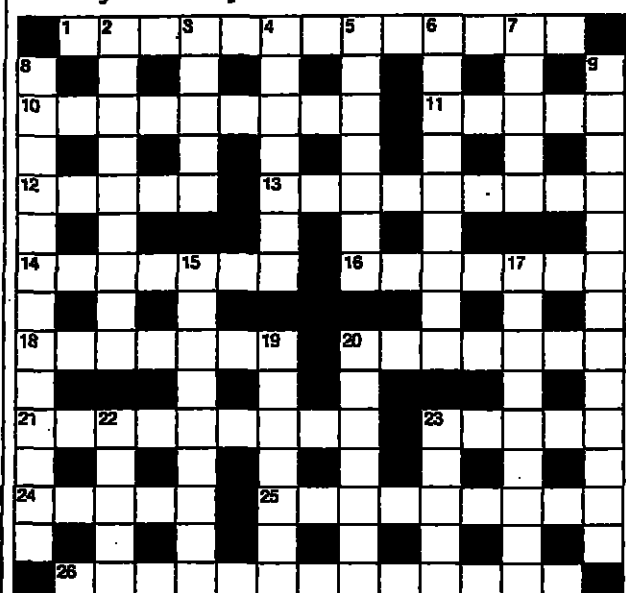
Behind Armani came Silvio Berlusconi's Mediaset, Italy's main commercial TV broadcaster and the highest-placed quoted company in the ranking. Mediaset, which specialises in showing films, scantily clad girls and re-runs of American soaps, had profits totalling 28.2 per cent of its sales of just over 3 trillion lire.

At present, Giorgio Armani SpA, the group parent company, is owned outright by Giorgio Armani. He has been pondering floating part of the company for some time and has been restructuring it in preparation.

Analysts in Milan guess that if he goes ahead — a final decision is expected soon — it could be worth in the region of 4.5 trillion lire.

Guardian Crossword No 21,167

Set by Mercury



Across

- 1 Scottish meat supplier with dancing bear needs a gun (5,5)
- 10, 14 Where a dentist looks dejected? (4,2,3,5)
- 12 Won't work inside and is paid less (5)
- 13 Name raised during boy's visits (5,4)
- 14 Agreed to have front removed as going in to be oiled (7)
- 16 Sink? Isn't that where you keep the coal? (7)
- 18 Stupid fellow sits around but helps (7)
- 20 Irritate worker by dashing (7)
- 21 Speed with which she's stain removing (9)
- 23 Caught one boy embracing hair (5)
- 24 Providing two articles brought back from an army canteen (5)
- 25 I'm Peter and I'm broadcasting when it's best to advertise (5,4)
- 26 Hide tube after work (2,11)

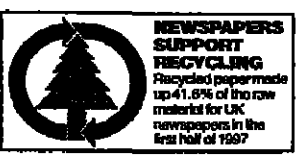
Down

- 2 We brides solved about fifty puzzles (5)

- 3 One menages to go round dervish buildings (5)
- 4 Tempted to stop introducing twitching eagles (7)
- 5 Old record players need leads without plug (7)
- 6 Halfwit dead from the neck up (5)
- 7 Grab union leader and spur production (5)
- 8 Saying something else old lady takes joint of meat to counter (5,7)
- 9 People have to be trained to use it from coast to coast (7,5)
- 15 Slight trace in cup is so unusual (9)
- 17 It takes one Devon banker to stand against established practice (9)
- 19 One of the high points of religion? (7)
- 20 Drive in silence, being out of breath (7)
- 22 Military hat has turned up all right (5)
- 23 Deal with as far as diocese to begin with (3,2)

Solution tomorrow

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CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,165